

How to Cheat at Cards

And Catch Your Friends Doing It

A. D. Livingston



The Cardsharps by Valentin de Boulogne

Macmillan

Preface

BEFORE PUBLISHING my book *Poker Strategy and Winning Play*, I decided to include a chapter about cheating. My reasoning was that no amount of strategy, fancy footwork, and oddsmanship will enable a player to win at poker, or any other card game, if he is up against a stacked deck. A reviewer said, "It's good reading, but you may never again wholly trust your poker-night companions after being advised of all the foul play that is possible."

I fear that the reviewer put his finger on an unfortunate consequence of reading a book like *Dealing with Cheats*. It tends to rob one of the pleasures of the game. It tends to muddle one's concentration on the proper way to play a hand with nagging questions about how it was dealt. It tends to make one overly suspicious of his fellows. I don't have to look very far to find grounds for my apprehensions in this matter. Ever since word got out that I was studying the ways of sharpers and learning a trick or two with the deck, some of my poker buddies have begun to look at each other with a certain puzzled expression whenever I fill a swing hand in high-low split; and the more I learn of all the foul play that is possible, the more closely I watch *them*. The thing strikes even closer home. Ever since I started asking my wife to proofread various chapters of this book, she has begun to take a close look at my dealing whenever I'm lucky enough to get ahead of her in our weekly bouts of pinochle or klabberjass. Ever since I started acquiring a drawerful of marked cards for the illustrations in this book, my five-year-old son has begun to take more than a passing interest in the deck when I connect too often in concentration or slapjack. It is therefore with some misgiving that I publish this book.

My doubts lift, however, when I do a little arithmetic. If a sucker is born every minute, 525,600 are brought into the world annually, plus an additional 1,440 on leap year. I feel that this book can save some of them a lot of money, if they happen to read it. Yet I'm not offering any guarantees, and I'm not naive enough to believe that I can save all the suckers and rid the world of sharks. The best I can hope for with this book is that after reading it the skilled player will be a little better prepared to assure himself that he is not bluffing a cold deck at the poker table, laying even money the wrong way on first-flop dice, or bucking a Kentucky step-up at blackjack.

-A. D. LIVINGSTON

Never play with a man who looks intently at the pack and shuffles the cards slowly. If he is not locating the cards for the ensuing deal he is wasting time, and should be hurried a little.

-R. F. FOSTER

Contents

PART ONE: CARDSHARPS AND GAFFS

- 1 Peeking, Spying, and Signaling
- 2 Marked Cards and Belly Strippers
- 3 Slick Dealing
- 4 False Shuffles, Shifty Cuts, and Haymaker Stacks
- 5 Palming, Holding Out, and Ringing In
- 6 Copping and Counterfeiting

PART TWO: WHAT'S YOUR GAME

- 7 Poker
- 8 Blackjack
- 9 Gin Rummy
- 10 Bridge
- 11 High Card And High Spade
- 12 Other Card Games
- 13 Craps
- 14 Roulette And Other Casino Games
- 15 Heads Or Tails
- 16 Another Man's Game

PART THREE: A LICENSE TO STEAL

- 17 The Edge And The Ice
- 18 Welshers, Paperhangers And Bad Losers
- 19 Con Games Played On Gamblers
- 20 The Ultimate Gaff

APPENDIX: DON'T CHEAT YOURSELF

How To Shuffle
How To Cut
How To Deal

1. Peeking, Spying, and Signaling

"**THE DEALER ALWAYS PEEKED** at the top card," my old gambling buddy said, giving me the lowdown on a crooked stud game just across the river from New Orleans. "If the top card was a dud, he dealt it to me fair and square. But if it was an ace or a picture card, he saved it for himself or his partner and then swished me out a second. That's hard to beat in stud poker."

It's hard to beat in most other card games, too. Merely knowing the identity of the top card gives the sharper a decided advantage, and knowing how to control its distribution by some sort of slick dealing gives him a sure thing, unless he suddenly finds himself bucking a different sort of sharper who doesn't always play the hand that's dealt to him!

There are several methods of peeking. In Figure 1, the stud dealer is pretending to check his hole card prior to the next round of dealing. But he already knows what he has in the hole and he's really more interested now in what's on top of the deck.



Figure 1

The peek is set up by bulging the top card by pressure from his left thumb so that he can see the index. Feigning a more or less natural effort to shield his hole card from the players sitting next to him he has moved the deck in close and has completely turned it over: but he is really positioning the deck so that no player at the table can see what he sees.

If properly done, the front peek, as the move is sometimes called, cannot be detected conclusively from across the table. But it's a good idea to be suspicious of any dealer who holds the deck in this manner while checking his down cards. (In fact, be suspicious of anyone who has cause to check his down cards frequently while dealing such games as stud poker or blackjack; a good player usually remembers what he has in the hole, and he makes a point of *not* looking.) Also, watch the dealer's eyes. Does he really look at his hole card, or does his eye dart toward the deck? Eye movements toward a suspiciously held deck do not prove that a dealer is peeking, but they do give you grounds enough either to stop playing with the guy or to ask him to leave the deck flat on the table while he is dealing!

In Figure 2, a left-handed dealer is holding the deck in his right hand. It is very easy for him to peek at both the top and the bottom cards because the index numbers are in the top left corner and he merely has to pull the top card over a bit with his thumb. It is, however, more difficult for the left-handed dealer to peek without being detected, especially in a game like poker.



Figure 2

In Figure 3, the dealer is using a slightly different method, called the back peek. Pressure from his index finger on one corner of the deck, along with a lifting action from the muscles at the base of his left thumb, causes the top card to spread a bit from the rest of the deck. This method is sometimes used while the dealer pretends to check his hole card, but it is more often used when there is any sort of interruption in the deal, as when a player is trying to decide whether or not he wants a hit in blackjack. Although the dealer does not have to turn the deck completely over for the back peek, he does have to tilt it to an awkward angle. (But the angle is more natural if the dealer is standing up.) Again, watch the dealer's eyes if you suspect peeking.

Card detective Michael MacDougall apparently perfected a variation of the back



Figure 3

peek to a high degree. While dealing out one card, he is peeking at the next! The May 1939 issue of *Reader's Digest* carried an article on how MacDougall put on a demonstration of slick dealing while being watched closely by 100 luminaries of the bridge world. Before the first hand, he bid six no-trump, dealt the cards, and made it! The deck had been shuffled by Howard Schenken and had been cut by B. Jay Becker. Here's a related quote from the May 1950 *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*:

Michael MacDougall . . . is among the most skilful practitioners of all cheating methods with cards. He can, for example, take an honestly shuffled and cut pack of cards and deal a hand of bridge in which all the high cards fall to himself and his partner. He does this by "flashing" each card before it is dealt, and giving it to an opponent if it is a low card or saving it (by slick dealing) for himself or his partner if it is a high card. He "flashes" the card by holding it slightly apart—not more than a thirty-second of an inch—from the rest of the pack and catching a glimpse only of its corner. The unpracticed eye could not identify the card at this angle if given unlimited time; MacDougall must do it in a minor fraction of a second. It is an impressive and nearly incredible display, described here only as an extreme

example of what can be done when the qualified magician wishes to turn to cardsharpping.

I said earlier that a peek artist could be asked to leave the deck on the table. But the fact that a person deals with the deck flat on the table does not preclude a certain kind of peeking! As shown in Figure 4, a dealer can peek at the second card while dealing off the top card. This method of peeking is not as deadly as when the sharper has the deck in his hands, but it is nevertheless of no small value in many card games.



Figure 4

In this form of peeking, the dealer must place the deck well out in front of him and he must deal the cards off the back of the deck rather than forward. Such a deal is both unnatural and unnecessary. But in gin rummy and two-handed pinochle, the move is natural whenever a player draws his card off the stock. In fact, this method of peeking is perhaps the most common way of cheating in gin and similar games. Watch the player who hesitates slightly when drawing his card from the stock.

In another form of peeking, the dealer catches a glimpse of the cards as he serves them around the table. This means that he knows the value of the down cards but has no control over who gets what. In order to flash the cards, the dealer holds them for the serve between his middle and index fingers and sort of flicks them across the table; before serving the card, his right thumb lifts the back of the card just enough for him to get in a quick look. But this sort of peeking can be done only with an offbeat and rather flashy dealing motion, which in itself is suspect.

In still another method, a bottom dealer or a holdout artist can peek at the bottom card when he squares up the deck, after the cut and prior to the deal, as shown in Figure 5. (Again, watch the dealer's eyes closely.) And note that many petty cheats do not use any fancy finger work to peek at the bottom card on their deal; they merely tilt the deck and look! It is also possible for a player to peek at the bottom card while cutting the deck for another dealer. When lifting off the top packet, he grasps the deck and applies pressure with his middle finger,



Figure 5

as shown in Figure 6. This bulges the deck and exposes the end of the bottom card of the top packet, which will end up on the bottom of the deck when the cut is completed.

An entirely different form of peeking is to use a shiner, which is simply a mirror or mirrorlike device used to read the cards as they are being dealt off the deck. Shiners are of little use to sharpers during the actual deal; by the time they see the card, it is too late to control where it goes. But sharpers can use shiners before the deal or during a lull in play to read the bottom card or the top card (by making it protrude a bit from the rest of the deck) preparatory to some sort of slick dealing. A table shiner has been designed for this purpose; it is attached under the table by a



Figure 6

suction cup and swings out for action. But really skilled mechanics will avoid this sort of thing simply because gadgets are difficult to explain if discovered.

Lesser cheats, called glim workers, do gain an advantage over their opponents by using shiners. The best mirrors for this purpose are concave, and they can be put in pipes, in flip-top rings, on match boxes, in a dummy stack of poker chips, and even in the tip of a cigarette. Most of the shiners sold by magic shops, however, are junk as far as the card-sharper is concerned. The experienced glim workers prefer to use shiny cigarette cases, money clips, ashtrays, and other such objects without mirrors affixed to them. Shiny dealing boxes have been manufactured especially for peeking, and card detective Frank Garcia reported catching a woman dealer using a tiny piece of broken Christmas-tree bulb concealed on the underside of her fingernail! Figure 7 shows a glim worker reading the bottom card of the deck.

The best way to detect shiners is to watch the dealer's eyes. He'll be looking at the shiner, not at the card he is dealing. And be suspicious of any object on the table, a precaution that would have paid off in the story about Cactus Pete, a gambler who disguised himself as an ornery old prospector. Striking gold in a poker game at Deadwood, South Dakota, a bustling mining town, Cactus Pete sat down to play, unsheathed a knife with a shiny blade, put it on the table, and vowed to stick any *hombre* that he caught cheating. The knife stayed on the table throughout the game, for Cactus Pete was the only cheater sitting in. That knife blade was indeed a good shiner!

Gerolamo Cardano, an Italian scholar and gambler, described shiners, marked cards, and other gaffs in his *Book on Games of Chance*, written around 1520. He made a reference to the "organ" method of peeking, or spying, with the aid of an



Figure 7

accomplice. But he did not spell out the details, apparently because the ruse was so well known in his day that he thought an explanation would be unnecessary. Anyway, it was a system in which a sharper in a card game received signals from a kibitzer or from a spy in another room. The signals, which of course revealed information about an opponent's hand, were sent and received by a loose floor board. The cheat sat with his foot on one end of the board while the other end was pressed by an accomplice in the gaming room or by strings from a spy manning a peephole in another room. A later book (John Nevil Maskelyne's *Sharps and Flats*, 1894) indicated that the Morse code can be used in connection with the organ! A similar device was described in 1887 by the notorious riverboat gambler George Devol in his *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi*.

My partner proposed that we fix up some plan to down the gamblers that played with us on the old boat, so we finally hit upon a scheme. We bored a hole under one of the tables, and another one under one of the beds in a stateroom opposite. Then we fixed a nail into a spring, and fastened the spring on the under side of the floor, so that the nail would come up through the floor under the table. Next we attached a fine wire to the spring, and ran it up into the stateroom. Then we bored a hole in the bulkhead of the stateroom, just over the top berth, so that a person could lie in the berth and look out into the cabin.

Now we were ready for the thoroughbreds. When we would get one of our smart friends, we would seat him at our table in his chair, which was always on the side of our stateroom. We called it ours, for we had fitted it up just to suit us; and for fear some one would use it when we were out travelling for our health, we paid for it all the time. We had a good boy that liked to lie down and make money, so we would put him in the upper berth while the game was in progress. He would look through the peephole, and if our friend had one pair he would pull the wire once; if two pair, twice; if threes, three times; if fours, four times, etc. We would kick off one boot and put our foot over the nail, and then we would be able to tell what hand our friend had.

Devol's scheme worked fine until the boy went to sleep during a game. Having received no signals for some time, Devol picked up a spittoon and threw it at the stateroom. That restored all communications, but Devol's opponent wanted to know why he had thrown the spittoon. Devol told him his cards had been running bad, and he had heard it was a good sign to kick over a spittoon when playing cards. The opponent replied, "I noticed that your luck changed just after you threw her, and I will try it the next time I play in bad luck."

Devol's signals were no doubt an improvement over those sent by the organ, but they were rather crude as compared to those made possible by modern technology and miniaturization. Optical gadgets make remote spying easier, and "shockers" can receive electronic signals from a sender without any Rube Goldbergish

arrangement of nails-in-springs-activated-by-strings. With modern equipment, signals can be sent across a room without wires. Radio cue prompters, as they are called, can be purchased at about \$350. That's pretty high, but I know of one (or some similar electronic gadget) that grossed more than \$400,000!

The game was gin rummy. The place, the plush Friar's Club in Beverly Hills, California. Such entertainment figures as Zeppo Marx, Phil Silvers, and Tony Martin, along with Harry Karl, the shoe tycoon and husband of Debbie Reynolds, were among the fleeced Friars.

A federal grand jury indicted six men (five of whom were members of the club) in relation to the cheating; they were a co-owner of a movie-studio-equipment firm, a former associate of Al Capone, two Nevada hotel and casino men, a professional gambler who owned a Santa Monica card club, and, believe it or not, a prominent physician. All six men were found guilty.

Perhaps the most common form of peeking (or *looking*) requires no sophisticated electronic gear, no accomplice, and no skill at manipulating a deck of playing cards. One player simply looks at another's hand. Often there is a thin line here between cheating and being alert. In my opinion, the thin line can be drawn precisely at the point where a peeker must start stretching his neck in order to see an opponent's hand! I knew one poker player who had a neck as long and as flexible as a gooseneck lamp. This crook relieved a visitor to our game of his vacation money within a few minutes. I don't really feel sorry for the victim in this case because I believe that each player should shield his cards from peekers and kibitzers in a poker game. Besides, the pigeon was going to lose his money anyway, and "Gooseneck" just got it over with fast. My real regret is that he got all the easy pickings before I had a fair pluck at it!

Still another common form of peeking is to watch the cards as they are dealt out around the table. Again, there is a thin line here between cheating and being alert. And again, the line can be drawn precisely at the point where a player must slouch down in his seat in order to see the cards. In any event, it is the dealer's responsibility to serve the cards face down without exposing them. The average dealer will flash a red jack or a black queen from time to time, but if he does so too frequently he should be asked to serve more carefully.

Some "locators" watch for every exposed card during the shuffle and cut as well as on the deal. Often they will follow cards from the discard pile of one hand through the shuffle, cut, and deal for the next hand. Just knowing the relative position of a few cards in the deck gives them an advantage. (See the Appendix for some advice on the proper way to shuffle, cut, and deal.)

I said a little earlier that the poker player should shield his hand from kibitzers, who can give a hand away even without intending to cheat. It is easy to shield your hole cards in a game like stud poker, but it would be very inconvenient and would have a bearing on one's playing skill in games like bridge or gin rummy. If you gamble at these games for high stakes, it is best to bar out all kibitzers. But the creatures seem to be everywhere, and, according to *Bridge World*, there are several types:

A *kibitzer* is one who has asked and received permission to watch. He may participate in discussion with the players.

A *dorbitzer* is one who has asked and received permission of the kibitzers to join them. He may speak to the latter but not to the players.

A *tsitser* is one who has asked permission of nobody. His rights are strictly limited to hovering in the background and expressing his sentiments by exclaiming, "Ts! ts! ts!"

So ... if the only game in town is haunted by these creatures, my advice is that you listen for "Ts!" when you hold one pair, "Ts! ts!" when you hold two pairs, "Ts! ts! ts!" when you hold triplets, and "Ts! ts! ts! ts!" when you hold four-of-a-kind!

So far this chapter has covered several forms of peeking, spying, and signals sent from someone outside the game to an active player. If the truth be known, signaling between two active players is one of the more common methods of cheating at cards. It is very easy for any two players to arrange a set of signals before the game begins. The possibilities of such signals are infinite—how one stacks his chips on the table, how one holds his cigarette, how one announces his bet or bid, and so on. One common method is used with cards having picture backs; a card reversed in a certain position in the hand could have meaning to a partner or an accomplice.

Player-to-player signals of any sort are very effective in games like bridge and partnership pinochle, but they can also be used in poker and other card games. Signals between a blackjack dealer and an accomplice sitting on his immediate right can be used in connection with peeking and slick dealing.

2. Marked Cards and Belly Strippers

ANY DECK OF PLAYING CARDS can be marked in one way or another. Because some of the familiar brands prove to have been tampered with, however, does not asperse the card manufacturers. Modern playing cards, contrary to popular belief, are not marked, defaced, trimmed, or sorted during the manufacturing process.

It is true that a few "magic" or "trick" playing cards with offbeat patterns, such as clock-dial designs, are marked when they are printed, but neither the knowledgeable gambler nor the professional cardsharp would have any truck with these. Such a deck is shown in Figure 8. There are markings scattered all over the back of these cards, but notice especially the white dots in the rim of the upper left circles. Reading from right to left, these dots indicate an ace, deuce, trey, 4, and 5.

Popular brands of playing cards can be premarked or otherwise doctored by the cheat himself, but matching the inks used on quality playing cards without

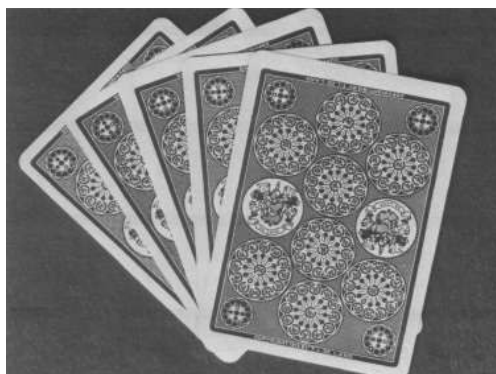


Figure 8

damaging the finishing glaze is rather difficult. Most of the work is done at the gambling supply houses, or in the back rooms at some "magic" shops. The skilled employees at these houses carefully remove all wrappings, seals, and revenue stamps from legitimate decks, which are purchased by the gross. After doctoring the cards in one way or another, they rewrap, re-seal, and restamp the decks. The repackaged cards, as well as a number of other crooked gambling devices, are sold

regularly through magic shops or directly to sharpeners. A few years ago, marked cards and other crooked gambling gear could be mailed or shipped in any way, but recent laws have curtailed this activity somewhat. But not altogether. Some of the marked cards that were photographed for this chapter were ordered and received through the U.S. mail. One page of the supplier's brochure is shown in Figure 9.

POPULAR READERS



No. 403 Rider

RIDER

A—All in left-hand corner in one place. Considered the best ever placed on this back. Very good for Stud.

B—Excellent blockout work on the birds. Large and easy to read.

C—Clever Work in flower at side-center of card. Good for Skin.

D—Many prefer this side combination. Also good for Skin.

E—Smart work on the left-hand corner figure.

F—Fine blockout in the flower at end.

G—Excellent combination on the grass in center circle.

No. 403. Rider A-B-C-D-E-F or G
Sample Deck\$ 6.50

NEW FAN

A—Easy to read and impossible to find. This is the best ever placed on Fan Back.

B—Brace work in Frame. Hard to detect, yet, large and easy to play.

C—Perfect shade work on the Fan.


D—Work is on the hook at side of card. One of the best. Good for Skin.

E—Blockout around inner border of Fan. Very hard to detect.

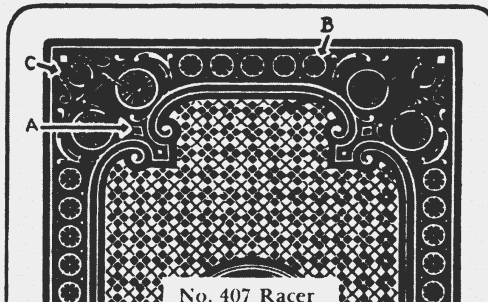
F—Fine blockout around outer edge. One of the smartest on this back.

G—Excellent blockout combination on the straight line near left corner.

No. 405. New Fan A-B-C-D-E-F or G
Sample Deck\$ 6.50



No. 405 New Fan



No. 407 Racer

RACER

A—An old reliable combination. Block-out which is very good. One of our best sellers.

B—In the circle. Well liked and good for Stud.

C—On extreme edge.

D—Clever work on the dots at end of card.

E—Fine blockout in wheel at left corner.

No. 407. Racer A-B-C-D or E
Sample Deck\$ 6.50

Suit marking supplied on any of the above cards at an additional charge of **\$ 1.00** deck. When ordering specify name and letter of combination. Example: Rider A.

Figure 9

So, all a cheat has to do is order a marked deck and get it into your game. But remember that your buying the cards yourself does not preclude a marked deck. Whole cases of marked cards have been planted at retail outlets by cheats working in cahoots with the retailer or someone in his employ; and large gambling syndicates have been known to flood a whole retail area with marked cards by working in cahoots with an accomplice at the wholesale or distributive level. Remember also that it is relatively easy for a sharper to cop the honest deck out of a

game and ring in a marked deck of the same brand and color. In fact, there are specialists, called switchmen, whose primary function is to ring in marked or otherwise gaffed cards for sharpers.

Nor must the complete sharper necessarily have pre-marked cards. He can do the work right at the gambling table, and in a number of ways. Before getting into these in-play marking techniques, however, I would like to discuss the more common methods of premarking cards:

Border work. This term refers to markings put on cards by inking a slight hump on the borders, as shown in Figure 10. (Some popular brands of playing cards, such as Bicycle, have white borders between the design and the edge of the card, whereas other brands, such as Bee, have patterns that cover the entire back.) Usually, a mark high toward the top of the border indicates an ace; a slightly lower mark, a king; and so on. Also, some cards have a small inner border, or a white strip, that can be used for markings.

In one sense, border work makes ideal markings for slick dealers because the marks on the top card can be seen readily when the cards are held in the hand. But border work is relatively easy for a keen-eyed player to spot; consequently, the really good sharper will probably avoid such markings.



Figure 10

Line work. Possibly the most sophisticated and intricate method of marking cards is called line work. In a sense, really good line work approaches the artistic because the fine lines must appear to be part of the original design. There are, of course, degrees of line work, from very fine to rather heavy, depending on the artist and on what the sharper wants or thinks he can use safely. A hawk-eyed dealer could get by with very fine work, whereas a cheat who wanted to read the top card of the stock in gin rummy would require something heavier.

The big advantage of fine lines is that, if well placed, they are difficult to detect. The possibilities of line placement and graduation on some cards are almost infinite, but in the simplest system one line would indicate an ace and two lines would indicate a king, or some such key cards. Figure 11 shows one way that line work can be applied to Bicycle cards.



Figure 11

The card on the left is marked, but the one on the right is not.

Brace work. Similar to line work, brace work is more bold and therefore more visible. It has the advantage of being easy to read even from across the table but the disadvantage of being easy to detect by anyone who knows what to look for. Whereas line work is often placed in the background of pictorial designs, the heavier brace work is usually placed directly on a major design figure, as on the bicycle in Figure 12. In really good brace work, the heavy bar will seem to be part



Figure 12

of the design. Obviously, cards with overall geometric pattern designs do not lend themselves to brace work.

Blockout work. Done with special ink that perfectly matches the customary red and blue used on most gambling cards, blockout work is one of the easiest methods of marking cards. Red or blue ink is usually applied to fill white portions of the design, but sometimes white is used to block out colored portions. (White ink, however, doesn't work too well because an insoluble substance in it is not absorbed by the card as readily as the soluble dyes used in blue or red inks. The result is that white markings stand out, especially when viewed at the proper angle to a light source.)

Whereas brace work and line work are ideally suited to backs with printed designs, blockout work is usually suited to cards having an overall pattern. It is especially effective in reducing or enlarging diamonds and other geometric figures, as shown in Figure 13.

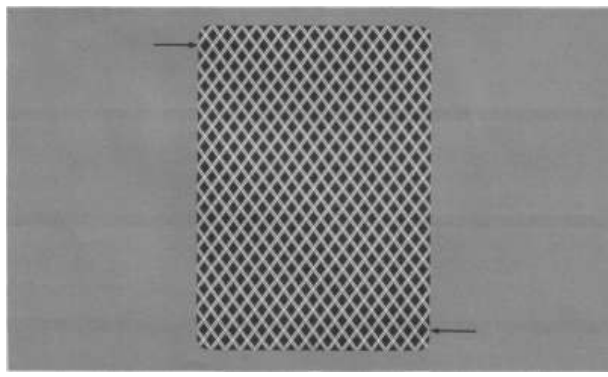


Figure 13

Cutout work. Similar in result to blackout work, cutout work is accomplished by removing part of a design by a special tool or scalpel, or with a chemical compound. One formula for such a compound specifies carbolic acid, salicylic acid, and denatured alcohol. Cutout work, unless it is extremely well done, is usually easier to spot than blackout work because the finishing glaze will be affected more.

Shading. Not to be confused with daubing (discussed later), shading refers to any method of "discoloring" cards before a game begins. Shading can be done on the overall pattern, but it is usually restricted to a small portion, as shown in Figure 14. The work can be done by brushing lightly with the proper ink, or an aniline dye mixed with alcohol can be used. In fact, a bit of ammonia applied to the back of a card and blotted up after a few seconds will shade some brands.

The backs of cards have also been shaded by placing key cards in direct sunlight for several hours.

At one time, playing cards with plain backs were popular in gambling clubs simply because there was no design to contain markings. But they could be marked, as Robert-Houdin revealed in his memoirs:

In 1849, M. B—, a magistrate belonging to the police office of the Seine, begged me to examine and verify one hundred and fifty packs of cards, seized in the possession of a man whose antecedents were far from being as unblemished as his cards. The latter, indeed, were perfectly white, and this peculiarity had hitherto foiled the most minute investigation. It was impossible for the most practised eye to detect the least alteration or the slightest mark, and they all seemed very respectable packs of cards. I consented to examine the cards, as I hoped to detect a manoeuvre which must be clever as it was so carefully concealed.



Figure 14

I could only do so after my performance was over, and so each night, before going to bed, I sat down with a bright lamp, and remained at my task till sleep or want of success routed me from my post.

Thus I spent nearly a fortnight, examining, both with my eyes and a strong magnifying glass, the form and imperceptible varieties in the cards composing the one hundred and fifty packs. I could detect nothing, and, weary of the job, I began to agree in the opinion of the previous experts.

"I am sure there is nothing the matter with these cards," I said, one night, angrily, as I threw them across the table.

Suddenly I fancied I noticed a pale spot on the glistening back of these cards, and near one of the corners. I stepped forward, and it disappeared, but, strangely enough, it reappeared as I fell back.

"What a magnificent dodge!" I exclaimed in my enthusiasm. "I have it: that is the distinguishing mark."

Houdin didn't explain how the mark was made on the cards, but several methods have been used, such as shading or dulling the glaze with water blotching or steam ironing. A sharp knife can be used to remove the glaze, or the glaze can be altered in spots by a concavity made with a rounded instrument.

After all this became old hat, the manufacturers came out with an *unglazed* club card. The sharpers were soon *glazing* key cards, or portions of cards, with a wax. Again, such marks were read when the card was held at the proper angle to the light.

Luminous readers. Red cards marked with green luminous ink that is invisible to the naked eye but brazenly visible with the aid of tinted glasses or visors are called luminous readers. The effect is shown in Figure 15. Contrary to popular belief, luminous readers are seldom used by professional gamblers or by any cheat except the stupid novice. Luminous readers took on a new life, though, when the gambling supply houses developed tinted contact lenses. But, as Frank Garcia pointed out in *Marked Cards and Loaded Dice*, the contact lenses are not undetectable. They are likely to produce a red tint—a certain unnatural look—around the pupil of the eye, especially in profile; and the blink rate of the wearer is likely to be higher

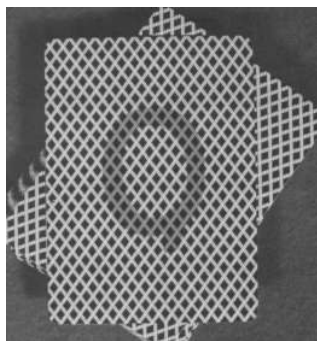


Figure 15

than normal. Even with a prescription, the contact lenses are likely to be very uncomfortable. The accomplished sharper will still avoid luminous readers, but the gaff supply houses have no doubt sold the amateur cheat many of these contact lenses at \$150 a pair, or more.

At any rate, it is not necessary for the cheat, whoever he may be, to purchase the marked decks. If he has the tinted glasses or visors, he can mark cards before a game by using luminous inks or pencils, or he can mark them during play by using luminous daub.

Sorts. When playing cards are cut with a die during the manufacturing process, there are inevitably slight variations along the edge of the back pattern. Because these variations are numerous and random in each legitimate deck, such imperfections are of no value to the sharper. But if he buys a hundred or more decks, and if he has enough time, he can sort one deck in which the pattern-edge variations will not be random. The effect is shown in Figure 16.

Instead of making up his own sorts, the cheat can purchase them from the gaff supply houses, which buy many gross of decks and hire girls to pigeonhole key cards that show similar edge variations. Many combinations are possible, as shown by the following list of sorts that are available from a single supply house:

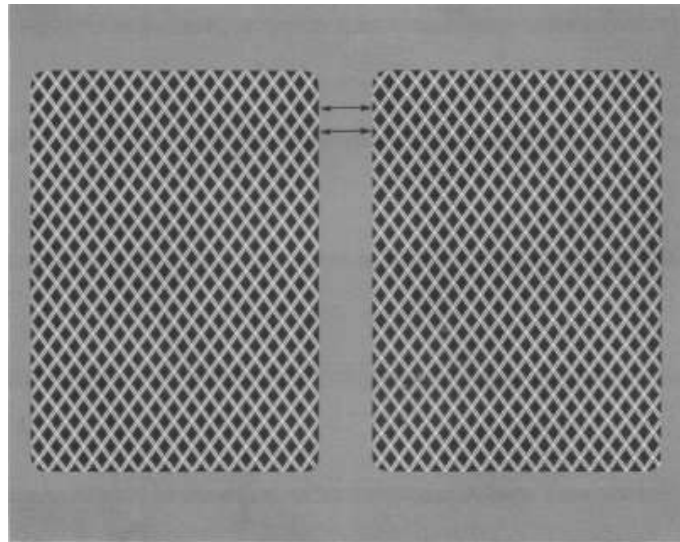


Figure 16

Series 1

For poker—to read A-K-Q, balance of deck alike. For poker—to read A-K, balance of deck odd and even. For blackjack—to read all aces alike, K-Q-J-10's alike, all 9-8-7-6's alike, all 5-4-3-2's alike. For suit only—to read all hearts alike, all spades alike, all diamonds alike, all clubs alike.

Series 2

One combination reads A-K-Q-J-10, balance of deck alike.

Another combination to read A-K-Q-J, balance of deck odd and even.

For blackjack—to read all aces alike, all K-Q-J-10's, alike, all 9-8's alike, all 7-6's alike, all 5-4's alike, all 3-2's alike.

Series 3

For poker—to read A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7-6, balance of deck alike.

For blackjack—to read A-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9, with all K-Q-J-10's alike.

Series 4

Made to read high and low, odd and even, or A-K only. Work is placed entirely on ends of cards. Sides are not touched. Any two- or three-way combination may be supplied. State style desired when ordering.

Series 5

Blackjack special—a new fast combination which has the ends trimmed slightly; the sides remain their natural size. All A-2-3-4-5's alike. All 6-7-8's alike. All K-Q-J-10-9's alike.

As implied above, the cheat or the gaff supply house can fake sorts by trimming certain cards slightly. But fake sorts are more dangerous for the cheat because they can be detected, whereas true sorts are considered to be the safest of marked cards because they are not actually marked.

Cards having an overall pattern are ideal for sorts because the variations are more pronounced than with cards having a white border. But cards that have a white border can be used in the same ways as fake sorts if the edges of the key cards are trimmed enough to make readable variations in the margin. (Fake sorts can be made in much the same way as strippers, discussed later in this chapter.) These variations can be detected with the naked eye, and can be proved by sizing them against a standard deck of playing cards.

As stated earlier, the sharper need not have premarked cards, and may even prefer to use one of the following techniques for marking cards during play:

Waving and bending. Bending cards in one way or another is the most common form of marking a deck in play. The best work along this line is probably done by bending a key card over one finger and under another, as shown in Figure 17. Such a card can be spotted in the deck, on top of the deck, and sometimes in another player's hand. (Also, waved cards can be used as a crimp for controlling the cut.)

Bending the corners of cards is a form of waving. Once, while I was sitting in on a \$5-ante lowball game in a hotel room, the guy who ran the game asked me why I kept looking at the cards. "Because half the deck seems to be marked," I said. "The *low* half." Then, by first inspecting the corners of each card, I proceeded to deal all the low tickets face up on the table.

"How in the world is he doing that?" asked a player from a neighboring town,



Figure 17

who, I found out later, was called the Teacher! The guy owned a beauty shop—which brings us to the next topic.

Cosmetics. "Marking" or shading the backs of playing cards by using various kinds of gook or daub is sometimes called cosmetics, and, indeed, some lipsticks and even hair sprays work fairly well. Dozens of concoctions are available for marking cards, including special daubs for making instant luminous readers.

The sharper can also make his own daub. Here's an old formula from *Sharps and Flats*: "Olive oil, stearine, and champhor are incorporated in a melted condition with aniline of the required hue. The mixture is then poured out upon a level surface and allowed to cool. When cold it is worked up with the blade of a knife upon a sheet of white paper, to get rid of the superfluous oil. It is then ready for use."

Several more formulas were set forth in a booklet called *How It's Done: A Complete Expose of Tested Formulas for Card Men*. This booklet also contains a how-to text on daub dispensers:

A one-sixteenth ounce capacity tin container with a removable cover is most convenient and practical to dispense daub. Solder a small safety pin to the back of the container, and then pack it with daub. Attach the container to some part of your clothing. Pin it in your vest pocket, under your tie, beneath your coat lapel or any place which will be easily accessible and at the same time hidden from view.

Rub the tip of the index finger over the daub, and then apply it to the portion of the card you wish to mark. The amount of pressure used in applying the daub to the card will, obviously, determine the noticeableness of the daub. The marks may be applied to cards at different locations to designate their respective face value.

Generally, a daub leaves a slight smudge, or shade, on the back of the cards, as shown (greatly exaggerated) in Figure 18. The shading will be more pronounced on the white portions of the back. Ideally, red daub should be used on red cards; blue, on blue cards. But an all-purpose "golden" daub will work fairly well on either red or blue cards.

Pegging. The act of marking cards by means of a thumb-tack or a special prick



Figure 18

(preferably of soft gold, which will make an indentation in the card without puncturing or tearing the surface) is called pegging. Usually, the tack or prick will protrude from a band-aid or tape around the thumb.

A sharp-pointed thumbnail or fingernail can be used for the same purpose, although the indentation will be slightly different. Generally, peg work (also called blistering or punching) is felt with the fingers or thumb rather than read with the eye; hence, it is a convenient method of marking cards for slick dealing. But the bandage, which indeed stands out like a sore thumb, is a tipoff that most accomplished card mechanics would not risk in smart play.

Special rings are available with a prick on the bottom, as shown in Figure 19. Also, a skin-colored, easily removed half-ring attaches to the underside of the pegger's finger.



Figure 19

Denting. Similar in effect to pegging, denting is usually accomplished with a sharp (but not too pointed) fingernail. It is a natural method for female dealers. The impress is made across the top of the card, either vertically or horizontally, and is felt while the sharper deals.

I have also seen diagonal work in the corner of cards, and on one occasion it was so subtle that I could not determine immediately whether the sharper was feeling the impress or whether he saw it under a play of light. This sharper turned up in a private poker game that I used to frequent. He got into the game through a fellow named Lucy, a friend of the host's. The host, an expert player, was fairly knowledgeable in the ways of cardsharps. The sharper himself was not a dark-complexioned character with a sinister moustache. He didn't even have long, supple fingers. Instead, he was a young fellow with a crewcut and had a very agreeable manner.

He lost a little money the first night he played. And the second. Yet he didn't seem to be a pigeon or an inexperienced player. His smooth (but not showy) riffle shuffle and unerring deal indicated to me that this guy had played a lot of cards somewhere. In short, I suspected him from the outset, and I confided my suspicions to the host.

The host did not share my views; he felt that the young guy was simply out of his class in both poker skill and stakes, and he predicted that we had seen the last of him after that second session. Lucy wouldn't finger us anyway, the host said. But the guy did return, and, as it happened, on a night when I had other plans. As the game progressed, my host noticed (he was on guard now) that the sharper caught more than a normal share of aces and kings.

By playing light off the back of an ace at various angles to the light, the host glimpsed a diagonal impress. Without a word, he gathered the deck and threw it violently across the room. The sharper turned a little white as the cards fluttered down, but he stuck out the session—losing again.

The next day, the host called me over and showed me the marked cards. Again he predicted that the sharper would not come back. This time he was right. Lucy? He didn't come back either!

Shortly after this incident, I read of a similar mark being used by a Las Vegas blackjack dealer. Here's an account from Edward O. Thorp's *Beat the Dealer*:

One of the cheat dealers, who had worked for the casinos on 24-hour call, showed me a novel card-marking method. He took his thumbnail and pressed the backs of aces and tens on their top edge. He did not scratch them but rather merely rounded them slightly; when this was done the cards seemed to be no different than the others in the deck, as I and several friends learned as we hunted for the markings. However, when the deck was held at a certain angle to the light, the edges of the marked cards gleamed just enough so that a trained eye could pick them out. Because of the angles involved in light reflection, when the dealer can see the gleam, no one else can.

This dealer claimed the Gaming Control Board had at different times confiscated several decks which he had so marked and that images of them had been projected, greatly enlarged on a wall, without the markings ever having been detected.

Nailing. Making an impress in the *edge* of a card with the thumbnail (Figure 20) is one of the oldest methods of marking cards during play. Old or not, I have seen it used several times. Nailing is sometimes called nail pricking, rim jagging, or punctuation. As Sidney H. Radner aptly pointed out in *How to Spot Card Sharps and Their Methods*, indexing could well be another name for nailing; if the work is properly done, finding (or cutting to) a card in the deck is much like using a thumb-indexed dictionary.



Figure 20

Sanding. The sandman usually wears a bandage similar to the peg worker's, but it can be on a finger instead of a thumb. The bandage will wrap around a small strip of sandpaper, and the sharper runs the edge of the key cards (such as the spades in bridge) through a slit in the bandage, as shown in Figure 21. But the sandman for all seasons need not necessarily wear a bandage; some gummed, skin-colored paper can be stuck on his finger or hand at an inconspicuous spot. Also, sandpaper can be used to dull the glaze on the back of playing cards, but this method is not widely used today.

Figure 22 shows the effect of sanded cards, which stand out rather like a new joker in an old deck. But remember that the sharper need not sand the length of the card's edge, and that the work need not be as heavy as that shown in the photograph. The more experienced sharpers will desire markings only on the key cards, so that just a few strokes will be required on the entire deck.



Figure 21

Figure 22

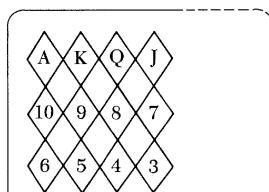
The fewer the marks, the less the probability of being detected. But whole decks can be marked systematically, often by one of the following schemes:

Edge system. All marks are placed up and down the side (or across the top) of the card itself, or else along the edge of white borders. Typically, the aces will be at the top; the kings, one gradation lower; queens, two lower; and so on in descending order. The edge of a large design, such as the fan in the New Fan design, can also be used in the edge system, and of course nailing along the edge of the card is done by this system.

Clock system. This system, in which the marks are placed in some circular pattern, enables the cheat to read the cards much like telling time on a clock dial. Usually, the aces will be at one o'clock; the deuces, at two o'clock; and so on, clockwise, around to the queen at twelve o'clock. The king is either unmarked or is indicated in the center of the design. Figure 8 shows cards marked by this system.

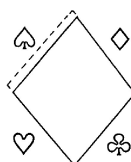
Of course, all the ranks of card need not be marked for most games, and the "dial" may have only a few divisions, as shown in item B in the Racer back of Figure 9. (Note also that the spokes of the bicycle wheels could be used in the clock system.) Some designs, such as the Tally Ho, lend themselves, to the clock system more readily than others.

Block system. This system is used on cards having overall geometric patterns. A typical arrangement would be to limit all marks to the first four diamonds in the first three rows on the Bee 67 back. Within this block, the diamonds would be marked (as in Figure 13) and the position of the diamond in the block would indicate the rank of the card. In the scheme below, enlarging the first diamond in the second row would indicate a 10.



Note that no deuce is indicated in this particular scheme, so that an unmarked card would be a deuce.

Suit systems. There are several methods of indicating suits, and they will often be coded to the four sides of a geometrical figure. In the scheme below, the line of the diamond would be extended toward the top left to indicate spades:



In Figure 8, the inner white circle contains four blue circles in the north-south-east-west positions. A mark in the north circle indicates diamonds; south, hearts; east, spades; and west, clubs.

Generally, suits are not marked as often as card rank, simply because suits are not as important in most card games. Knowing the suit in blackjack, for instance, would be useless information. On the other hand, suits can be very important in games

like red dog, and decks marked for such games would more than likely contain markings for suits as well as rank.

There are some specific tip-offs to look for when you suspect marked cards. Some of the points are either stated or made obvious in the above discussions of various markings. If, for example, a character showed up in your game with a bandaged thumb, you would know, from the discussion of pegging, to rub your fingertips over the back of the key cards.

The kind of playing cards used in the game often provide a key to what markings to look for. Generally, cards that have intricate figures and scrollwork are easier to mark, or can be marked in more ways, than cards that have an overall pattern. (My supply house, however, lists ten sets of markings for the popular Bee 67 back!) Also, pasteboard cards are more easily marked than plastic cards made with cellulose acetate or some such tough material. Good plastic cards (not to be confused with plastic-coated cards) are more immune to waving and other forms of in-play marking. But they *can* be marked, especially by pregame methods. Top-quality pasteboard brands, such as Bee or Bicycle, are more difficult to mark than cheaper cards.

Almost invariably a sharper using marked cards will look closely at the deck while he is dealing. He may also look closely at the cards in your hand, or at the stock while playing gin rummy and similar games. Therefore, don't spend all your time squinting at the minutia on the backs of the cards. Look at the players, too. Sharpers will often give themselves away.

Generally, premarked cards as well as those marked in play are doctored in the top left and bottom right corners. (But there are exceptions, as shown by Figure 9.) Very fine line work is sometimes difficult to spot, but most border work, brace work, etc., can be detected right at the card table by using the riffle test, which is conducted as follows:

1. Square the deck perfectly with one of the short ends toward you.
2. With your right hand (if you are right-handed), place your fingers in the center of the deck and your thumb along the center of the short end.
3. Riffle the deck as shown in Figure 23.

During the riffle, watch the backs of the cards carefully. If the cards are marked, especially with heavy work, the variations in the pattern will cause a motion-picture effect and the markings will almost jump out at you.



Figure 23

The riffle test takes only a few seconds and should offend no one at the gaming table—if the deck is honest. Because the cards seem to pass the riffle test, however,

does not necessarily mean that they are unmarked. Subtle line work is difficult to spot at the gaming table, unless you know exactly what you are looking for and exactly where it will appear. Generally, it is best to concentrate on the key cards and not worry about systems of marking, since most of these can be easily detected by the riffle test.

If a quick riffle test fails to reveal markings, it is probably a mistake to concentrate on the cards too much at the gaming table. Remember that it is difficult to play your best game when you are concerned about marked cards. If the play at the table doesn't ring true, and if one or more of the players seems to be paying too much attention to the deck, it's best to quit the game. If you do continue playing while suspecting marked cards, ask for a new deck, and, if possible, put the old deck into your pocket for study at your leisure. This request, following a riffle test, will probably scare the cheat into leaving early or convince him to play honestly.

What should you do when you detect marked cards in a game? There is no universal answer. A good deal depends on you, on where you are playing, and on who you are playing with. Usually it's better for the other players in the game if you expose the cheat or scare him into leaving, but in some cases there may be a certain legal or even physical danger to you personally. Some marked cards would be considered as evidence in a court of law, but even this does not guarantee satisfaction, as will be shown in Part Three.

I knew one well-seasoned gambler who was taken by a cheat in a head-to-head game one afternoon. He lost a good deal of money, although previous sessions had convinced him that he was the better player. He suspected something. When he finally quit, he took the deck with him, over the sharper's protests. At home, he shut himself in a room and studied the deck for an hour. Even a magnifying glass revealed nothing. Still not convinced, he got in his car and drove 150 miles to show the deck to a cousin who happened to be a professional gambler. The pro found some very fine line work in a scroll.

Back home, the gambler got his two brothers, and the three of them roused the cheat out of bed in the middle of the night. He returned the money without an argument!

One of the oldest ways to gaff a deck of playing cards is to trim the edges. The purpose of such trimming is not to mark the card for visual reading but to gaff the key cards so that they can be "stripped" out of the deck, as shown in Figure 24.

Usually, a thirty-second of an inch is trimmed from the sides or ends of all the cards *except* the key cards, which are cut separately so that they are larger on one end or in the middle. After all the cards have been trimmed, their corners are rerounded.

The key cards will vary from one stripper deck to another, according to the game being played and the method in which the cheat uses the decks. But most strippers can be classified under one or another of the following headings:

Belly strippers. Also called side strippers and humps, these are the most commonly used of all the strippers, at least for gambling purposes. Belly strippers are made by trimming the sides (thereby narrowing the width) of all the cards except the key cards. Then the key cards are cut convexly on both long sides, so that a slight belly protrudes about the middle. The gambler uses belly strippers to cut to the key cards or to strip them out of the deck by running his fingers over the sides.

End strippers. These are the same as belly strippers except that the key cards are



Figure 24

trimmed on the ends (thereby shortening the length) instead of the sides.

Combination strippers. The gaff supply houses sell stripper decks that are trimmed on the ends and on the sides, thereby increasing the number of key cards available to the sharper. They also provide two sets of key cards, to be used in different hands. It is possible to purchase a stripper deck that is also marked.

Concave cards. To make belly strippers (which are convex), all the cards are trimmed down. To make concave cards, only the key cards need be trimmed, and they are cut slightly inward from the ends to the center. Concave cards are of use in cutting the deck. Note that when a sharper cuts to a belly stripper, it will be on the bottom of the top packet; but when he cuts to a concave card, it will be on the top of the bottom packet. Figure 25 shows an exaggerated concave card (left) beside an exaggerated belly stripper (right).

Briefs. A single stripper card, called a brief, is sometimes used in a deck to facilitate cutting to a stock of cards or as an aid to specialized sleights.

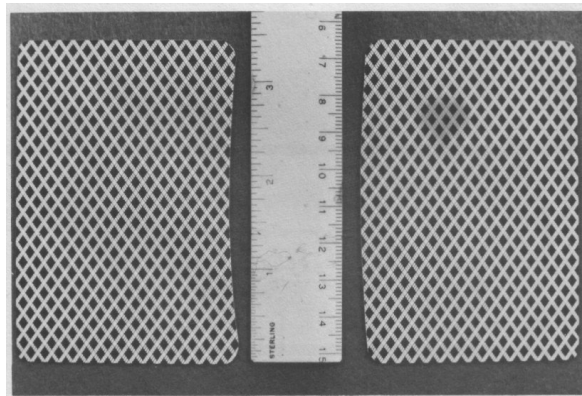
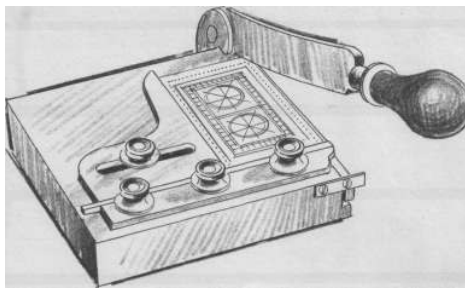


Figure 25



An old shearing machine used for making strippers.

Wedgies. These are primitive strippers, used mostly by amateur magicians, in which the key cards are wide on one end. The key cards are turned the opposite way from the rest of the deck; when the key cards are in position, however, they are very easy to strip out.

Most strippers can be detected by sizing the key cards against a regular card of the same brand. They can also be detected at the gaming table by squaring the deck perfectly and inspecting the sides with the eye and fingertips.

Precision strippers are readily available from the supply houses, as shown by the catalog page reproduced in Figure 26. Note that the sharper can specify his own key cards and can choose from a number of popular backs, such as Bee 67, Rider, New Fan, Tally Ho, and Racer. Also, some gaff supply houses sell precision trimming and corner-rounding equipment for the do-it-yourself enthusiast!

STRIPPERS OR HUMPS

We furnish special strippers made to strip any card or combination of cards you desire. Our work is all done by experts in this line of work and the tools we use are the latest improved type, resulting in work that is absolutely uniform and unequalled by any other firm.

The above supplied in the regulation side hump and this we always send unless instructed to the contrary. End strippers supplied if desired for the same price.

No. 451. Strippers or Humps, any back.....Sample Deck \$ 6.50

GIN RUMMY CARDS

Two new combinations of Strippers which have proven ideal for Gin or Call Rummy. Made up in any back, these cards are made by experts and are absolutely perfect. Your choice of two combinations:

Three Queens and 7, 8, 9, 10, Jack of one suit
Three Kings and 8, 9, 10, Jack, Queen of one suit

Also supplied in any other combination you desire.

No. 451. Gin Rummy Strippers, Specify back and combination wantedSample Deck \$ 6.50

COMBINATION STRIPPERS

We supply special strippers to strip one combination from the side and a different one from the end. When ordering be sure to state the combinations wanted and which to strip from the side.

No. 452. Combination Strippers, any back.....Sample Deck \$ 7.50

BANKER AND BROKER OR HIGH AND LOW STRIPPERS

No. 453. Banker and Broker Strippers, any back.....Sample Deck \$ 7.50

No. 454. High and Low Strippers, any back.....Sample Deck 7.50

HIGH-LOW CUT CARDS

SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW . . . You can cut high and your opponent cuts low. Easy to do with our simple directions. Made up in any style back. You can cut a high card any time you want to. Full remittance must accompany orders for above.

No. 455. High-Low Cut Cards, specify back.....Per Deck \$ 7.50

SHAKEOUTS

We are the only firm successfully able to supply you with perfect Shakeout cards. Made in any combination on any back. Full amount must accompany orders for the above.

No. 456. Shakeout Cards, specify combination and style back....Per Deck \$ 6.00

CONCAVE STRIPPERS

Supplied in any combination same as side strippers. Can also be made in conjunction with side strippers for special needs.

No. 457. Concave Strippers. Any Back, Any Combination.....Per Deck \$ 7.50

STRIPPERS AND READERS

We have a large demand for Readers that are also prepared for Strippers and can supply this work without delay. Any combination of strippers will be furnished on any back Readers desired. Be sure and state back and combination when ordering.

No. 460. Strippers and Readers.....Sample Deck \$ 10.00

Figure 26

3. SLICK DEALING

ANY WOULD-BE CARDSHARPER who has a natural dexterity and enough patience to practice long hours can learn to alter the natural distribution of playing cards on his deal. Even with his shirt sleeves rolled up, his deception in the close quarters at a gaming table can rival that of an accomplished magician relatively far removed from his audience. The cardsharp and the magician use some of the same sleights, so that how-to books and pamphlets written and published primarily, or ostensibly, for the magician find their way into the card-sharp's hands. Magic, Inc., a Chicago outfit, publishes a 144-page catalog containing many of these books, booklets, and instruction sheets. A thousand bucks wouldn't buy them all!

Other than moral, the big difference between the two professions is that the magician must perfect a repertoire of sleights whereas the cardsharp will usually concentrate on one routine. It will become his thing, and he will do it very, very well—if he intends to ply his trade until his fingers become stiff with age. He may become so good that he will look down his nose at lesser mechanics and miscellaneous cheats who have to resort to shiners and cold decks and a hundred other cheap gaffs.

In the language of the gambler, a dealer who is adept at manipulating a deck of playing cards is called a mechanic. A mechanic who specializes in dealing the second card in the deck—thereby saving the top card for himself or an accomplice—is called a number-two man. If the truth be known, number-two men probably outnumber really skilled cellar men, who specialize in dealing from the bottom of the deck. (Bottom dealers are also called base dealers and subway dealers.)

I am reluctant to buck the popularity of the phrase "dealing from the bottom." Yet there are explainable reasons why the unsung number-two man is, statistically speaking, the number-one card mechanic, not in fiction or movies or TV but at the card table.

1. Consider marked cards. They are all but useless in the cellar man's art as such, simply because markings on the backs of the bottom cards would not be in view. The number-two man, on the other hand, has the back of the top card in plain view on his deal, and he can save it for himself or give it to any player at the table.

2. The bottom card remains fixed until the cellar man takes it. But the top card changes continuously during the course of a legitimate deal, thereby giving the number-two man a choice of distribution on a number of cards. In a seven-handed game of draw poker, for instance, he sees as many as thirty-five top cards before the draw.

3. The rise in popularity of blackjack in licensed casinos and illegal gambling joints created a demand for skilled number-two men, but not especially for bottom dealers, who are more or less foiled in this game by having the burned cards on the bottom of the deck.

4. The number-two man need not necessarily have to learn to stack the deck, nullify the cut, and so on, whereas cellar men must get a stock of cards on the bottom and keep them there through shuffles and cuts. Nor must the number-two man necessarily resort to marked cards, some of which are concrete evidence of cheating. Most of the second dealers who specialize in blackjack and stud poker (where the hole card is extremely important) can turn a nice profit merely by peeking at the top card and then controlling it. Peeking can be accomplished in several ways, as discussed in Chapter 1, but it is usually done while the dealer pretends to check his hole card.

5. It is easier to deal seconds than bottoms. The number-two man can achieve a smoothness that is difficult for the cellar man to match. To be sure, both kinds of sharper can fool the eye, but it is more difficult for the cellar man to hide his moves. (This opinion, however, is not universally held; I've read at least one statement, attributed to a master mechanic, to the effect that it's easier to deal good bottoms than good seconds.)

To deal seconds, the number-two man usually holds the deck firmly in his left hand. In a normal deal he pushes out the top card with his left thumb and takes it with his right thumb and forefinger for the serve. When he deals the second card, he still pushes out the top card with his left thumb; but his thumb then retracts the top card represented by the joker in Figure 27) while his right hand takes the second card. Actually, by exquisite control of pressure and grip and movement, he can make the second card protrude a fraction of an inch before he retracts the top card, thereby making the operation more certain. If he is not accomplished enough to start the second card moving out, he must sort of hit the deck with his right thumb after he has retracted the top card.



Figure 27

Dealing even passable seconds is no cinch, and all but true masters of the art are likely to give away the gaff—if you know what to watch for. Here are some tip-offs:

1. Notice the way the dealer holds the deck. Most number-two men use the standard mechanic's grip, in which the slightly beveled deck is held deep in the left palm, as



Figure 28

shown in Figure 28. The index finger extends along the end of the pack, and some accomplished number-two men use it as a gauge to prevent more than the top and second cards from starting off the deck. The other three fingers crook around the long edge, and the thumb extends diagonally out to the middle of the deck. But bear in mind that because a dealer holds the deck in this way does not necessarily brand him as a mechanic. Also, holding the deck another way certainly does not preclude second dealing. In fact, it's possible to deal seconds with one hand!

2. Listen for the telltale swish. The second card, in contact with both the top and third cards, makes a slightly different sound from a normal deal. The pressure point of the thumb on the deck has a lot to do with the noise. Heavy pressure of the thumb on top of the deck will cause noise, and a touch just light enough to keep the top card under control will result in less noise. In short, the intensity of the noise is inversely proportional to the mechanic's skill.

3. Watch the left thumb. In a normal deal, the dealer will lift his thumb up slightly after pushing out the top card. But while dealing seconds, the mechanic's thumb will stay in contact with the top card as he pushes it out and then retracts it. (There is, however, such a deal as the "raised-thumb" second.) But also watch the left side of the deck, where there may be a gap appearing and disappearing in a flick as the dealer works the top card back and forth. Such a gap is pointed out in Figure 29.

4. Watch for a forward and backward twist of the wrist as each card is dealt. Many second dealers flick the wrist up, thereby raising the deck slightly, as the right thumb is about to make contact with the second card, then flick down while the second is clearing the deck.

5. Watch the man who shows a marked preference for a certain kind of cards. It is harder to deal seconds with plastic cards than with pasteboards. And it's easier to spot seconds with cards having a white border (such as Bicycle) than with cards having an overall pattern (such as Bee); the difference can be seen by comparing



Figure 29

Figure 30 with Figure 31.

6. Inspect the cards for markings, paying attention to the top left and bottom right corners. Also, play light off the cards at different angles while looking for thumbnail indentations, creases, or peg bumps; again, pay particular attention to the top left corners.

7. Be wary of dealers who look at their down cards frequently in stud poker and blackjack. They may be peeking at the top card preparatory to dealing seconds.

8. Watch the man who always hums while dealing. Some number-two men hum as an aid to their second-dealing rhythm.



Figure 30

Figure 31

9. Be especially wary of the dealer who suddenly stops in the middle of the deal. He may be an inexperienced second dealer; they sometimes miss the second card after the top card is being retracted!

10. Beware the man who deals with one hand and seems to flick the cards to players around the table, especially when dealing the up cards in stud poker. A one-handed deal is both unnatural and unnecessary, and it may indicate that the dealer is practicing the easiest of all methods of dealing seconds. He can start the top two cards off the deck with his left thumb, then retract the top card just as he flicks his wrist. The momentum sends the second card out. The one-hand second deal works best in stud poker and blackjack, where the dealer puts cards on a player's hand instead of sailing them around as in a normal deal.

11. Beware the dealer who frequently moistens his right thumb at his lips.

12. Beware the dealer who leaves the deck on the table but holds it on one end with his left hand while dealing off cards with his right. Seconds can be dealt in this manner. The left thumb and middle finger grasp the deck on one end. On the sharper's "normal" deal, the left forefinger pivots the top card out. The right hand reaches for the card, momentarily shielding the deck or part of it. On a second deal, the left forefinger buckles the top card under the shield. As the top card straightens out to normal, it pushes out the second card. This sleight is not commonly used, and it works best if the sharper has only a few opponents at the table, as in gin rummy or two-handed pinochle. Also, the table second is rather limited in that the cheat who uses it must have marked cards.

A friend of mine told me, after listening to me hold forth at some length about seconds, that he wouldn't play cards for money with anybody, friend or stranger, unless they used a dealing box. "Then you'd really be asking for trouble," I said. "Only a skilled mechanic can deal seconds competently with his hands, but any jackleg cheat can do it to you with a gaffed dealing box!" I might have stretched the situation a bit with my friend, but it is significant to note that cards marked especially for dealing boxes are available from the gambling supply houses!

Like the slot machine and the Kepplinger-type holdout, the dealing box, including a dozen gaffed varieties, is an American contribution to the world. The first dealing boxes were designed to be used at faro, which at one time was the most popular banking game in this country. Here's a summary from Herbert Asbury's *Suckers Progress*:

For a hundred years after faro had been transplanted to America, the game was dealt from a pack held face downward in the dealer's left hand. Dealing boxes were an American innovation, and made their appearance about 1822, when a Virginia gambler named Bayley constructed the first one and put it into a game at Richmond.

It was of brass, about half an inch wider than a pack of cards and a little longer, and was covered over the top except for an oblong hole in the center, just large enough to enable the dealer to insert a single finger and push the top card through a slit in the side of the box, in which the pack had been placed face downward. Bayley attempted to market his invention, but it was not generally well received because it concealed the pack. The gambling houses in New Orleans refused to install it, and faro continued to be dealt from the left hand until 1825, when a Cincinnati watchmaker named Graves invented and introduced an open dealing box which quickly caught the public fancy. . . .

Crooked boxes were in use within a few months after the invention of the watchmaker Graves had been placed on the market, and for years there was a steady stream of dishonest appliances bearing such impressive names as gaff, tongue-tell, sand-tell, top-sight tell, end squeeze, screw box, needle squeeze, lever movement, coffee-mill, and horse-box. They were all dealing boxes with the exception of the gaff, which was a small instrument shaped like a shoemaker's awl and worn attached to a finger ring. Occasionally one of the gadgets got out of order and caused considerable embarrassment to the unlucky sharper who owned it, but as a rule they worked perfectly in the hands of competent operators, although some of them were intricate contrivances of springs, levers, sliding plates, thumb screws, and needle-like steel rods. Many were devised and manufactured by Graves himself, and others were invented by Louis David of Natchez, also a watchmaker, who made a fortune in the 1840's selling German silver tongue-tell boxes at from \$125 to \$175 each.

To set forth the mechanics of all the various kinds of gaffed dealing boxes would be much too tedious for a book like this and would require complete sets of engineering drawings. But readers with a scholarly interest in dealing boxes should read the faro chapters in John Philip Quinn's *Fools of Fortune* and John Nevil Maskelyne's *Sharps and Flats*. Also, take a look at the specifications for an ungaffable dealing box in Edward O. Thorp's *Beat the Dealer*. But the main point for the modern gambler to remember is that gaffed dealing boxes can still be used, especially to deal seconds in such games as blackjack.

Dealing from the bottom of the deck is one of the oldest and most deadly of card manipulations. A good cellar man is hard to spot, but I have seen more than one clumsy dealer literally steal a card off the bottom! Such a duffer will see the bottom card while squaring up the deck after the cut, whereas the accomplished cellar man will work a desired stock of cards to the bottom during his shuffle and then nullify the cut in one way or another. (Sleights related to bottom dealing are discussed in other chapters.) The beauty here is that the mechanic need not peek, need not have marked cards, and need not stack the deck by interlacing the proper number of fill cards between the cards desired for himself or his accomplice. All he has to do is get the desired cards on the bottom en bloc. A variation is for the sharper to work the desired cards to the top, then deal off the bottom to the good guys and off the top to himself or his accomplice.

At the beginning of a bottom deal, the sharper first starts dealing the top card, which distracts the eye and acts as a shield. Under the edge of the protruding top card he draws back the second finger and brings it in contact with the bottom card. At this point, the deck will be held by the corners with the rear of the deck against the palm below the base of the thumb. The top and bottom cards are pushed out simultaneously, as shown in Figure 32. The right thumb touches the top card (which will be retracted by the left thumb) and the right index finger touches the bottom card, bending it up somewhat. As the top card is retracted, the right thumb slides off and onto the top of the bottom card. The sharper now has the bottom card between his right thumb and forefinger, ready for the serve.



Figure 32

But some excellent cellar men can push out the bottom card with the third finger of the left hand instead of with the second finger. In this variation, he positions both the first and second fingers along the front of the deck. The advantage of this mechanic's grip and bottom deal is that the two fingers up front form a better shield, which is a valuable thing to a cellar dealer.

The big difficulty that any sharper has with any bottom deal is that there is a gap between the top and bottom cards (as can be seen in Figure 32), and that the motions of the thumb and finger of the left hand have to be perfectly coordinated. The second dealer, on the other hand, starts both the top and second cards off the deck with the same motion and with no gap between them. In bottoms, the top card will hide the gap somewhat if the top card is pushed out properly. But the gap will be a little too large for comfort at the beginning of the deal when the deck is thick. The thinner the deck, the smaller the gap. Also, a mechanic can get a better grip on a short deck, whereas a full deck tends to slip while dealing bottoms. Consequently, the cellar man usually does his work during the latter rounds of the deal, not at the beginning.

Here are some tip-offs if you suspect bottoms:

1. Watch for the mechanic's grip. Usually, the bottom dealer will require a slightly different grip from the second dealer. (For this reason, seldom will a mechanic try to master both deals.) As stated earlier, the bottom dealer may have both fingers around the front end of the deck. He will find no real advantage in having the deck beveled (which is a definite asset to most number-two men). His fingers on the left side of the deck are likely to be more widespread. Watch the little and third fingers, which must be got out of the way as the bottom cards come off.
2. Watch the position or attitude of the deck. Because of the gap between the top and bottom cards, the cellar man may tilt the front of the deck downward so that the top card will provide a better shield. This is simply a matter of viewing angle.
3. Watch for the "knuckle flash." The second (or third) finger on the left hand must be drawn back to get at the bottom card, and a knuckle may be exposed for a fraction of a second, as shown in Figure 33.
4. As in the third tip-off given under seconds, watch the left thumb.
5. Consider the cards. It is easier to spot bottoms with cards that have white



Figure 33

borders; consequently, the mechanic will try to avoid them.

6. Dealing bottoms is not silent. Listen for a little swish.
7. Watch the man who hums on his deal.
8. Watch the dealer as he picks up the cards prior to the shuffle. Is he putting a few cards together for a bottom stock? During the shuffle, is he leaving a block of cards unmixed on the bottom of the deck?
9. Watch the dealer who picks up only one packet of cards after the cut. If he can get away with this, he has ready access to a bottom stock and not much of a gap problem.
10. Watch out for strippers. If you've ever seen a magician deal out four aces, he may have been using a stripper deck together with a bottom deal. You probably won't encounter strippers in a game like poker with fairly knowledgeable players, but many a pigeon has been plucked, in short order, with strippers in two-handed games.
11. As in seconds, watch the one-handed dealer. It's fairly easy to deal either up cards or down cards off the bottom with one hand.

A warning: It may be dangerous to acquire set notions about how a mechanic deals bottoms and seconds. At one time, for example, it was a popular belief that a gambler would have a great advantage in dealing bottoms if part of his left middle finger had been cut off. (Actually, the only real advantage is that there would be no knuckle to flash.) This tiny bit of knowledge probably made more than one bumpkin too confident for his own good. In short, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and anyone reading this chapter should be reminded of this old proverb. In short, don't get too cocky in a game with strangers if you fail to spot a mechanic's grip! I have before me a six-dollar paperback book called *Seconds, Centers, Bottoms*, by Ed Mario.

It is 142 pages long and has 224 little how-to drawings. A number of offbeat deals and grips are described, such as the table seconds described earlier. Here are some of the headings:

New Push-Out Bottom Deal; Strike Bottom Deal; The Take Second Deal; The Push-Off Second; New Bottom Deal; The Stud Second; One Hand Bottom Deal; The Slide Push-Off Second; The Throw Bottom Deal; The Deep Bottom Deal; The Movie Second; One-Hand Stud Seconds; D'Amico One-Handed Second; Stanley James Stud Second; Mario One-Hand Second; The S.F. Bottom Deal; The S.F. Second Deals; Wiersbie's Double Deal; Missing-Finger Deals; Tabled Bottom Deal; Tabled Seconds; The Center Deal; Step Center Deal; Weakling's Center Deal; The Stroke Center; Side Steal Center Deal; The Tabled Center Deal; Mario Center Deal. . . .

Some of the headings in the above list specify some sort of "center" deal, in which the sharper deals from the middle of the deck. The touted advantage of the center deal is that the sharper who can master it need not worry about nullifying the cut (as in bottoms) or about marked cards or peeking (as in seconds). This sounds great, but a middle dealer in the gambling fraternity is as rare as a Robert-Houdin in the magic profession.

In one sense, the center deal is similar to the bottom deal, but infinitely more difficult. The sharper has a break in the deck and takes the bottom card of the packet above the break. Such a break can be formed by crimping the top of the deck when the sharper offers it for the cut. Another kind of break, or step, can be made by having the top packet protrude slightly over the bottom packet, as when the cards are not fitted together properly after the cut.

To be honest, I can't deal middles even in slow motion without the deck sometimes flushing from my hands like a covey of quail. Dealing middles apparently requires a good deal of strength in one's fingers. (By the way, I was in a professional gambler's rooms once and I saw two rubber balls, about the size of tennis balls. I think he used them to exercise his fingers, although I'm not absolutely certain that the guy was a mechanic, much less a middle dealer. But he sure as hell wasn't a baseball pitcher.) Although I managed to hold the deck together long enough to shoot the photograph used in Figure 34, I would like to quote the procedure from card detective Frank



Figure 34

Garcia's Marked Cards and Loaded Dice: *

As in any deal, honest or crooked, the left thumb pushes the top card forward and the right hand descends to grasp it. Now comes the difficult part. The left hand must squeeze the lower portion of the deck below the break, but not so obviously that a gap shows. Then the left second finger comes up under the desired card just above the break and feeds it out. The right thumb passes the top card which, of course, is withdrawn by the left thumb and catches the middle card with the right first finger.

Tip-offs? Some of the points made under seconds and bottoms would apply to middles, and one could watch for a break in the deck. But I don't think the card player need worry much about middle dealers. Cardician John Scarne estimated that the odds against tangling up with a middle dealer are roughly 1,000,000 to 1. Scarne claims that he can deal from the middle without the move being detected— but only after practicing eight hours a day for "twenty-odd" years. So, if you're worried about being taken to the cleaners by a middle dealer, just don't play cards for money with anybody over thirty!

4. False Shuffles, Shifty Cuts And Haymaker Stacks

THE MOST OBVIOUS KNOCKOUT PLAY I've ever seen a cheat make occurred in a poker game in the South. There were seven players. The game was high-low draw, in which the best and the worst hand split the pot equally. The house rules enforced the California low scale, in which A-2-3-4-5 is the best possible low hand and can also be played as a straight for high. Thus, a single player can possibly win both the high money and the low money.

The guy who dealt the hand was a sort of sticky-fingered prodigal son of a farmer who operated a molasses mill. Two of the players were dealt pat full houses; two held pat six-lows; two held fairly good low hands along with flushes! The cheat himself held a draw at a wheel straight flush, as in OA-2-3-4. He filled it on the draw, of course, and swung both high and low. The pot wasn't as big as might be expected, however, because some of the players were skeptical of the betting and raising. They were a good deal more than merely skeptical after six players held pat!

The glance from player to player and the shaking of heads and such comments as "That deck sure did get cold!" mounted collectively until one player made a direct accusation: They had been cold-decked. The cheat acted as though he didn't know what a cold deck was. Finally, the houseman, seeing that he was about to lose six good customers", said to the cheat, "We're going to search you. Have you got another deck of cards in your pocket?"

"Hell," said the cheat, "I've got three decks in my pocket."

In the end the players got their money back, and the cheat left unharmed. He was shot several weeks later for cold decking in another game, but he wasn't killed. He's still around, and maybe he has learned not to try to tap every player at the table in one hand!

Also called a cooler, the cold deck is a prestacked deck that is slipped into play. At the gaming table, cards are warmed by friction and by being held in the player's hands; the cold deck, then, is sometimes perceptibly cooler when it is run into the game.

The cold deck can be run into play by the cheat himself or by an accomplice, who may be another player, a kibitzer, or (often in some circles) a waiter, bellhop, or someone bringing sandwiches and drinks to the game. A drink spilled on the table, or some other such distraction, usually helps cover the switch; consequently, the worldly card player can sometimes spot a cold-decking crew at work even before the stacked cards are run in! But not always. A bunch of slick Turks and a dishonest croupier managed to put six stacked decks into a dealing shoe at Monte Carlo while the game was being watched by a *chef de parti* and two attendants. But of course most cold decks are used in private games where a single deck is in play. If the prestacked deck is to be run in after the cut, the cheat has no problem except that of not getting caught when making the switch. But if the cold deck is run in before the cut, it has to be shuffled or cut, or both, and a slick card mechanic will be required. He will have to false-shuffle and nullify the cut in one way or another, as will be explained later in this chapter. Usually, though, a really slick mechanic won't have to cold-deck his pigeons; he leaves this blatant form of cheating to crooks with less skill and more gall.

If a crook makes the cold deck his specialty—and some do—he will prefer to run the deck in on an honest player's deal. This will usually be done during the cut, and certainly after the shuffle is complete. Sometimes he'll switch before the cut, in which case he would have a prestacked and crimped deck. (The crimp will be discussed shortly.) Cutting the deck in plain view tends to allay post-mortem suspicions.

Whether the switch is made before or after the cut, remember that the sharper will usually ring in the cold deck during some distraction at the table (this can't be

emphasized too strongly), such as passing sandwiches around. Watch for the waiter who lowers a tray over the deck just before or just after the cut; he may be a switchman. Also watch the guy who blows his nose and has a handkerchief in his hand when he cuts or otherwise touches the deck. Finally, always be a little suspicious of those unbelievably good hands.

In most gambling games that continue from one session to another, week after week, the sharper will avoid the cold deck. Those big hands become suspicious after a while, and there is always the danger of being caught flat-handed while ringing the cold deck into play. Instead, the sharper will prefer to run up a few cards for himself from time to time, or to help his partner out with an ace or king now and then. Such a sharper may specialize in stacking the deck; that is, intermixing the proper number of cards between the desired cards so that the hand comes out during the course of a regular deal. Or he may stock cards on the bottom or top; that is, he may put the desired cards together en bloc at the top or bottom of the deck, in which case he must be able to deal bottoms. (Second dealing is more suited to peeking and using marked cards than to stocking.)

Here are some commonly used methods of stacking and stocking:

The pickup. An opportune time to tamper with the order of cards in the deck is when the dealer, or maybe his accomplice, gathers up cards (hands, melds, discards, etc.) at the end of the previous hand. Cards are often stacked during the pickup (as shown in Figure 35, where the dealer is stacking three jacks for a four-handed poker game, but sometimes they are merely stocked on top or bottom. Such a stock can be used by a bottom dealer, or it can be stacked during the shuffle.

How obvious the pickup is depends on the cheat's skill and on how ambitious (or cautious) he is concerning big hands. Quite often the really sly pickup artist will make use of his own hand, which may not have been exposed, thereby making his stock or stack unrecognizable. Consider a game of draw poker. The sharper holds 10-10-2-3-J and it's his next deal. He folds without exposing his cards. After the draw he deposits his hand onto the deck with the two 10's on top. He waits. During the showdown, one of the other players holds a third 10. The cheat puts this hand on the deck atop his own and tucks the other hands under the bottom. He may arrange the third, 10 so that it tops his pair, but if he's smart he'll use the hand without tampering with it. But he will remember the position of the 10.



Figure 35

If the 10 is, say, in the middle of the hand, the cheat now has X-X-10-X-X-10-10 on top. After beating the shuffle and the cut, he deals the first two cards off as usual.

Then he deals from the bottom until he can give the 10 to himself or his accomplice. And so on, until he has the three 10's.

Notice that in this particular example the dealer has done a minimum amount of fingering in the deadwood. But I've seen some cheats who rummage through the cards like they're after the needle in the haystack! Others arrange a stock at every opportunity. Then they follow it through another player's shuffle and cut, hoping that they can recognize a run in stud poker, widow poker, or such games as gin rummy.

The haymaker stack. In my opinion, the riffle shuffle is the best way of mixing a deck of playing cards, and I always watch anyone who uses the old overhand or haymaker shuffle. As John Scarne has said, this shuffle is "the stumblebum cheat's best friend!"

To understand how these stacks work, assume that the sharper has two aces on the bottom. He can't deal bottoms (maybe he doesn't know how), so he has to stack the cards so that the aces will fall to himself on a regular deal. Say he has three opponents. First, he shuffles about a fourth of the deck. Then he makes a double slip, as shown in Figure 36, by simultaneously pulling the ace off the bottom and the 7 off the top of the right-hand packet. This gets an ace down with one card on top of it. Next, he shuffles off two cards, thereby ending up with three cards on top of the ace. Now he makes another double slip and shuffles off two cards.

At this point, he shuffles off another card and pulls it slightly off the stack, as

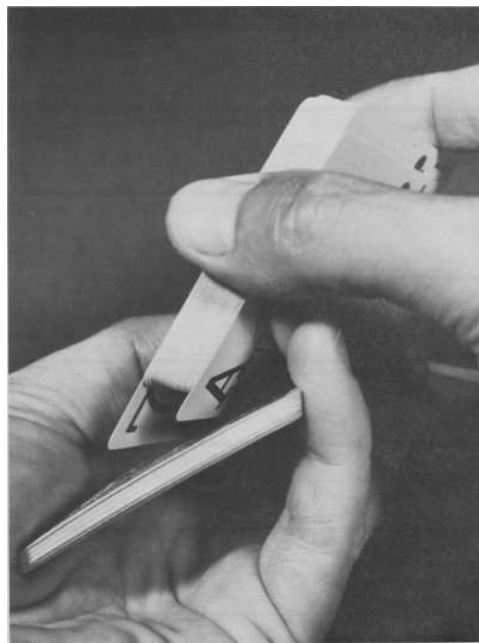


Figure 36

shown in Figure 37. This is called jogging, and the purpose of the jogged card is to mark the location of the stack in the deck. After shuffling off the rest of the deck, he cuts the cards at the jog, as shown in Figure 38, and puts the stack on top. Now, if he can beat the cut in one way or another, he's in business.

There are literally dozens of variations of the haymaker stack. Some are quite elaborate and require a lot of in-jogging and out-jogging and so much shuffling off that the cheat's hands go like pistons. The best bet is simply to be wary of anyone who uses the overhand shuffle.

The riffle stack. It is possible to stack cards while using the riffle shuffle, holding the pack as shown in Figure 39. The sharper will usually have a top or bottom stock to work with, and he'll simply fill in the proper number of cards on the riffle! To

perform this stack without a miss requires exquisite control of individual cards and perfect timing and coordination with both hands.

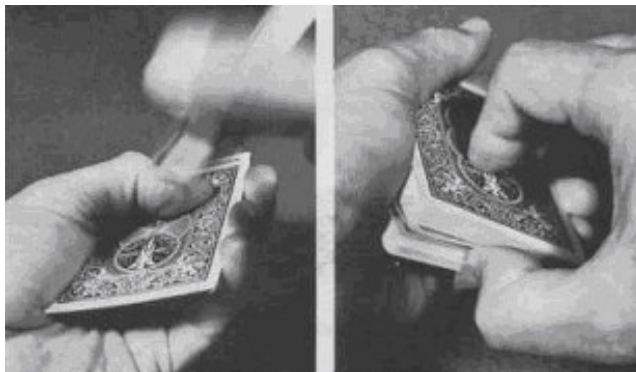


Figure 37

Figure 38



Figure 39

But it can be done by a sharper who practices long enough—and he won't even have to look at the deck at all times during the riffle! (Anyone who does watch the deck too closely while he shuffles may be locating a run of cards without trying to stack them.)

If the riffle stack is properly made and sparingly used, it is almost impossible to detect. But, fortunately, the run-of-the-mill cardsharper simply can't do it.

The butt-riffle stack. Possibly the easiest way to get a perfect shuffle consistently is to use the butt riffle. The cards are squared up in two packets and held as in Figure 40. Then the two ends are pushed together and a slight upward pressure is applied. If this is properly done, the cards will mesh together perfectly, as shown in Figure 41. The butt riffle seems a little uncanny, but it's quite easy and very accurate once one has the hang of it.

The butt riffle can be used very effectively to stack cards in two-handed poker or gin rummy or klabberjass. If the sharper has a top stock of three aces, for example, a perfect shuffle will set one or the other player up with a nice hand. Even assuming that both players have an equal chance of catching the trip aces, the sharper is still far ahead simply because he knows the other player has them!

The unusual butt shuffle is in itself the best tip-off for this method of stacking the deck.

After a crooked dealer has an arranged deck of cards in hand, he must somehow retain the stock or the stack during the shuffle—and then he must somehow beat the cut. There are several ways of doing both!

Consider the shuffles first:

The stock riffle. The simplest of the false shuffles is what I call the stock riffle. The sharper will have a stock of cards either on top or bottom of the deck. He simply riffles the cards in such a way that the stock remains intact and in place. If properly done, the moves are difficult to detect from across a gaming table.

To retain a bottom stock, the sharper will place the cards on the table and divide them for a riffle. His thumbs will not riffle from the ends of the packets; instead, they will work from the sides, as shown in Figure 39. (Note that the deck and sharper's fingers act as shields to cover the moves somewhat. Note also that only the corners of the cards mesh together.) If the sharper divides the deck from left to right, the bottom stock will be in the left packet. To retain the stock, the sharper will merely leave the bottom few cards on the table and then riffle the rest thoroughly. An alternate method would be to have the bottom stock under control and riffle it down

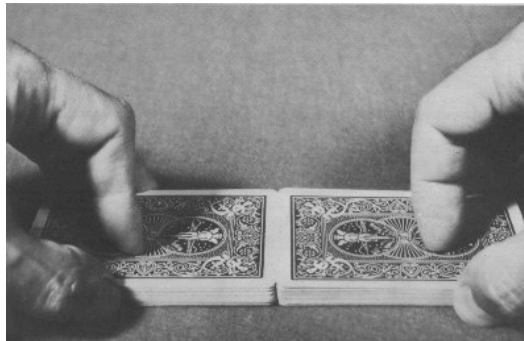


Figure 40

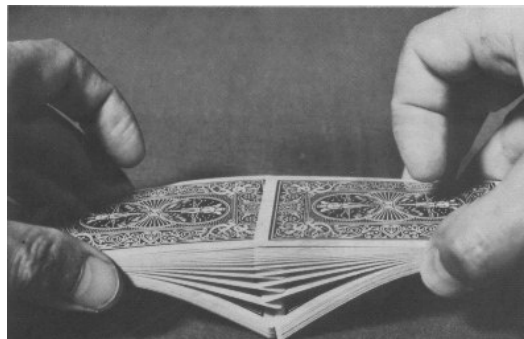


Figure 41

fast, before any of the cards from the right-hand packet are released.

To retain a top stock, the sharper proceeds pretty much as in a normal riffle. If the deck is divided from left to right, the top stock will be in the right packet. The sharper simply riffles the left packet a little faster than the right packet, so that the cards in the left packet will be depleted before the top stock falls. If properly timed, this method is not very noticeable when only a small top stock is to be retained, but it is not as hidden as the bottom-stock riffle. Some sharpeners will hide the moves by pulling the top card in the left hand slightly inward. The top left card will be put on top of the stock at the end of the riffle. In some cases, the sharper will want it there. In other cases he must get rid of it by making a slip cut or a top-card shift, both of which are discussed later in this chapter.

In either the top or bottom-stock riffle, the sharper may undercut or overcut the deck slightly. That is, he may have a few more cards in the packet that contains the stock.

Overhand false shuffle. There are several kinds of overhand false shuffles for retaining top or bottom stocks, but to describe them fully would require a lot of in-

jogging and out-jogging and to photograph them thoroughly would require a motion-picture camera operating in slow-motion mode. But here's the general idea:

Assume that the sharper has a top stock of five cards. He takes the deck in his right hand and pulls off five cards with his left thumb, using the overhand or haymaker shuffle. Next, he jogs a card, as was shown in Figure 37. Then he shuffles off the rest of the cards until the packet in his right hand is depleted. When he puts the deck back in his right hand for another shuffle, his right thumb pushes on the protruding card, which separates the stock from the rest of the deck, as shown in Figure 42. Then he shuffles off into his left hand normally until he passes the jog. Now he shuffles off the stock one by one, putting it back in its original order and on top. The whole cycle is usually repeated several times.



Figure 42

The pull-through. Whenever the sharper has an interlaced stack that runs deep into the deck—as, say, in draw poker with a full table—he must use the pull-through false shuffle. Up to a point, the pull-through looks like an ordinary riffle—but the sharper will actually pull one packet through the other so that the left packet ends up in his right hand and vice versa!

After the cards have been riffled, the sharper will start pushing the two packets together, as normal, but with one packet at an angle to the other, as shown in Figure 43. (The joker is face up on the right-hand packet to distinguish it from the other packet in the illustrations.) With the thumbs at the inner corners and the middle fingers on the other corners, the packets are pushed in so that the ends of one packet push through the other packet, as shown in Figure 44. When the packets are straightened so that they are almost parallel, note that the ends of both packets will protrude, as shown in Figure 45.

Instead of squaring the deck, the sharper takes hold of the protruding ends and pulls one packet through the other, as shown in Figure 46. The effect, if properly done,



Figure 43

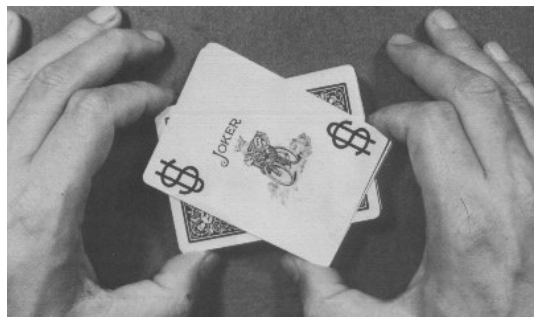


Figure 44

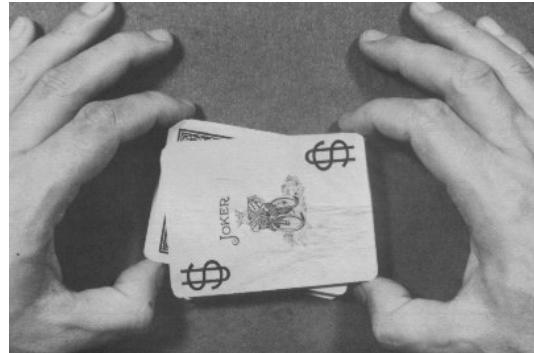


Figure 45



Figure 46

is almost the same as making a cut for the next riffle. An expert can riffle several times in this manner, but at the end of the last riffle he is in a bind. He must make the pull-through, which means that he must now slap one packet atop the other, as if making a cut before offering the cards for a player's cut. But remember that many honest dealers habitually make such a cut at the end of their shuffle. Still, this move can be a tip-off for the pull-through false shuffle.

Actually, the pull-through is quite sophisticated and requires an expert cardician. It is, therefore, not one of the more common sleights worked at the gaming table.

A break in a deck of cards made so that a sharper's buddy, or even an unsuspecting player, will cut, or is likely to cut, to a particular card or group of cards is called a crimp. This useful aid to cardsharpping is accomplished by bending or waving a card or a group of cards. Figure 47 illustrates the principle, but is greatly exaggerated; such a blatant crimp, by the way, is called a bridge. A crimp made by an experienced sharper is not nearly so visible, but it is very easy to "hit" when cutting the cards. Indeed, there is a subtle but unmistakable feeling to hitting a crimp. An honest player can often tell when he has hit a sharper's crimp if he knows the feeling. (Crimp a deck of cards and try it. Then ask someone else to cut, and I'll lay odds they will hit your crimp!)

One of the most effective crimps, called a debone, is made by bending a card or portion of the deck both sideways and endways. Such a crimp is all but invisible,

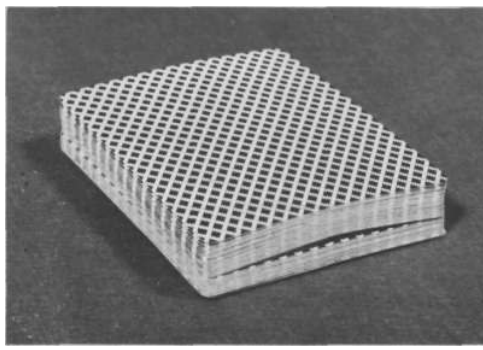


Figure 47

but it is still easy to hit. The most common crimp, however, is made at the end of a false shuffle or when the sharper offers the deck for the cut. He merely applies pressure to one end of the packet, and when he places the cards on the table for the cut, the crimped end will invariably point toward him, not toward the player who is to make the cut.

To understand the uses of the crimp, assume that the sharper has a bottom stock and has false-shuffled to retain it. Now he must beat the cut. After the last "shuffle" he breaks the deck in the middle and places the bottom half on top. During this move he makes a crimp simply by applying pressure to the bottom stock. Now he puts the deck out for the cut. If he has an accomplice sitting to his immediate right, there won't be any problem because he can hit the crimp 99 percent of the time. But when he doesn't have an accomplice, he still goes through the same routine. If the honest player hits the crimp, fine. If not, what has the sharper lost? He'll try again next deal. (Actually, most honest players have a pretty set way of cutting the cards; more often than not, they will cut more or less at the middle of the deck.)

Nor will the sharper for all seasons have exhausted his bag of tricks if the honest player misses the crimp! If he is good enough—and he must be quite good—he can actually shift the cut. That is, he can get his stock back in the right place regardless of where the cut is made. This can be done by several methods:

Two-handed shift. When the sharper picks up the cards after the cut, he puts the two packets together as usual, except that he retracts a card on the top of the bottom packet a bit with his left thumb, as shown in Figure 48. As he squares up the pack, he pushes down on this protruding card, which causes a bend and separates the two packets, as shown in Figure 49. The sharper then gets his little finger into the gap, as shown in Figure 50. Now he pulls out and downward on the top packet with his left hand and lifts the bottom section up with his right thumb and fingers, as shown in Figure 51. (All this is difficult to describe and photograph, but it will help to remember that the left hand moves the packet held in the right hand, and vice versa.) The sharper continues this motion until the top packet slides under the bottom and the bottom slides over the top, as shown in Figure 52.

Actually, there are several methods of doing this sleight. The sharper can, for instance, put the two packets together on the table before picking them up. In this case, he must leave a gap or step between the top and bottom packets.

One-handed shift. I've read a number of procedures for a one-handed shift, made after both packets have been put together and removed from the table. Here's one from S. W. Erdnase's old classic of cardsharpping, *The Expert at the Card Table*: Hold the deck in the left hand, little finger at one end, first and second fingers at side, thumb diagonally across top of deck with first joint pressed down against the opposite end, and the third finger curled up against the bottom. The second fingertip holds a break at the side, locating the cut, or separating the two packets that are to be

reversed. (See Figure 53.) Now by squeezing the under packet between the second finger and palm and pressing the upper packet with the thumb at one end against the little finger at the other end, it will be found that the two packets can be moved independently. To reverse their positions, hold the upper packet firmly by pressing with the thumb, open the two packets at the break and draw out the under packet with the second and third fingers, the second finger pulling down and third finger



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50

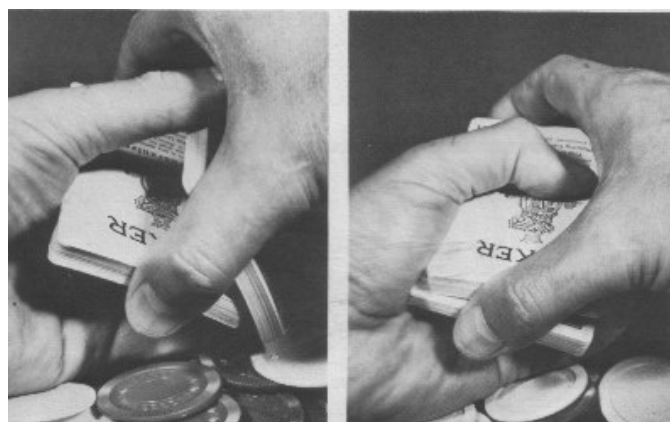


Figure 51

Figure 52



Figure 53

pressing up, until the inner side of the under packet clears the upper packet. (See Figure 54.) Then press the lower packet up and over on top. When getting the

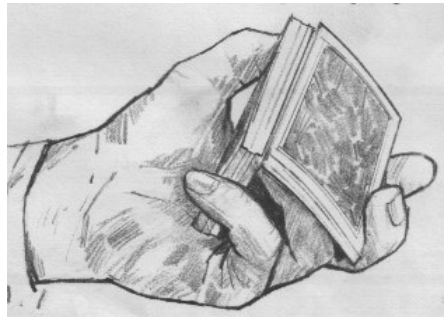


Figure 54

under packet out and forcing it clear of the upper packet, it is turned a little by the third finger, so that the corner at the little-finger end appears over the side first. The little finger aids in getting the under packet over or the upper packet underneath by pulling down on the upper packet when the lower one is just appearing over the side. (See Figure 55.)



Figure 55

Erdnase added, "Doubtless the first attempts to make this shift will impress the student that it is impossible." Well, he expressed my sentiments precisely! Yet, the shift has been in the literature of cardsharpping and legerdemain for a long, long time. Modern writers such as John Scarne and Frank Garcia say it can be done, and apparently there are several workable variations. But any sharper working this shift, or a variation, has a very serious problem: He must make the move under some sort of shield, such as an arm reaching across to an ashtray. As in other shifts, the moves are easier to hide from a single opponent and would be almost unthinkable in a seven-handed game of *panguingue*.

The table shift. Here's a very fast shift used when picking up the cards after the cut. As shown in Figure 56, the right hand picks up the bottom packet and starts to put it on the top packet, represented in the photograph by the joker. (Notice that the bottom half is held deep in the hand.) The bottom packet is taken across the top, as in Figure

57. At this point the forefinger is bent and is getting ready to raise up the top packet while the other finger prevents it from sliding out. Once the top packet is raised, the sharper slides the bottom packet underneath, as shown in Figure 58.

This shift is relatively easy, as shifts go, but remember that it must be done very quickly to go unnoticed at the gaming table. Again, some sort of shield or distraction helps. It also helps to have only one opponent.



Figure 56

The top-card shift. This shift doesn't require great finesse, and may be used by a budding sharper to shift the top card. It is usually used in connection with marked cards.

The cheat holds the deck in his left hand as usual. Then he grasps it on the ends with his right fingers and thumb. With his left fingers, he pulls the top card off and hurries it under the pack, as shown in Figure 59. The cheat must of course make this shift fast, and there will be a swishing and scraping sound.

So far this chapter has covered shifts and controlled cuts made with the aid of a crimp. The false cuts described below require neither crimps nor shifts, but do require an accomplice on the dealer's left.

The slip cut. This clever cut is quite useful for retaining a bottom stock or a top stock capped with a single card. The dealer's accomplice cuts by holding the deck in his



Figure 57

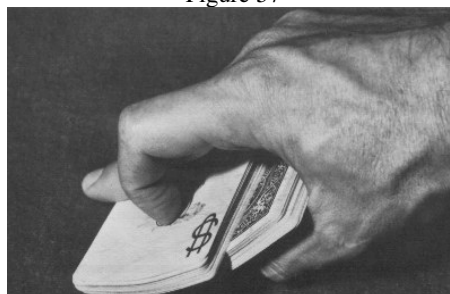


Figure 58

left hand, with thumb and middle fingers on the ends and the index finger on the top card. With his right hand, he zips out the top half of the deck (while retaining the top card with his index finger) and slaps it back on top.

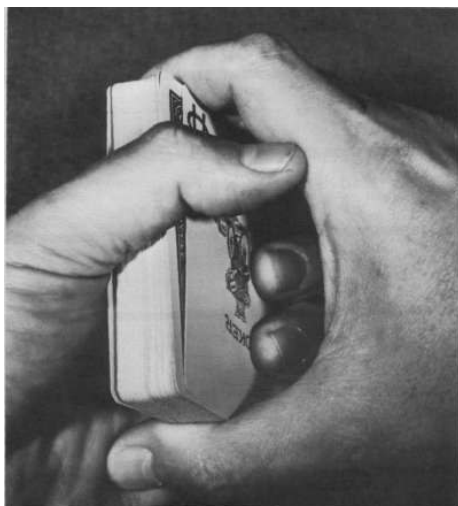


Figure 59

Figure 60 shows the move.

This cut is also called the blind cut, because the top card forms a shield or "blind" that fools the eye into thinking that the sharper has withdrawn the bottom half of the deck. If properly done, the move goes unnoticed, especially if the deck is tilted a bit forward.

I knew one tight old stud player who always made a slip cut. His thinking, as far as it went, was that removing one card from a top stock or stack would give him the hand the sharper intended to deal himself. It worked fine—until he ran up against a



Figure 60

bottom stock and a cellar man!

The triple cuts. These flashy cuts require both hands and three or more packets. When a slicker starts moving these packets around as shown in Figure 61, his moves are as difficult to follow as the shell game! There are many variations of this cut, and sometimes the sharper will shuffle the packets about on the table instead of working them with his hands. The best safeguard is to be suspicious of any cut that requires both hands and multiple packets.

The hand-over-hand cuts. Watch the player who picks the deck up and cuts as in



Figure 61

Figure 62. By holding a break in the deck with his thumb or finger, he has no difficulty in bringing a top stock back to the top or a bottom stock back to the bottom.

In some variations of this cut, the cards are left on the table and the right hand makes an almost circular motion while the left hand pulls cards off onto the table. If the top stock is pulled off first, it will project a bit from the other cards that are piled on top of it. Also, a bottom stock can be preserved in similar cuts.

Again, just be a little suspicious of any player who touches the deck with both hands while cutting.

Slick-ace cuts. Slick aces are discussed on page 175, in connection with cutting high card for money. Note here that when the backs of aces (or other key cards) are properly treated with a certain wax or compound, they will be slicker than the other cards. This enables the sharper to cut to them.

Stripper cuts. The stripper deck that contains ace humps will enable anyone to cut off an ace, and a single stripper or brief can be used as an aid in cutting to a stock or stack.

In spite of all the sleights and tricks in the cardsharp's trade, I suspect that the most commonly used "false cuts" require no skill whatsoever! If a player to the dealer's right cuts the deck and leaves both packets on the table (as most players do when they cut), the crooked dealer merely picks up the top packet and puts it back exactly the way it was. This simple ruse is more likely to be noticed if the dealer picks up the top packet immediately after the cut, but it often goes unnoticed in a loose game if the dealer lights a cigarette or performs some other action to kill a few seconds.

If challenged, the dealer can always say that he made a mistake. Such mistakes are, in fact, quite common.



Figure 62

As a variation, the crooked dealer might pick up the bottom packet with his right hand and place it in his left. Then he puts the top packet on the bottom packet, exactly as they were to start with.

A similar but more deceptive ruse requires an accomplice on the dealer's right. The helper uses both hands for the cut. The left hand draws out the bottom packet and places it on the table toward the dealer. With a slower motion and an upward swing, the right hand places the top packet on the bottom packet, just as they were. The movements appear to be natural because if the right hand placed the top packet toward the dealer the left would follow slower with the same upward swing.

As other writers have pointed out, simple ruses like these will often fool smart company that would not fall for an expertly manipulated one-hand shift!

5. Palming, Holding Out And Ringing In

STEALING CARDS FROM THE TABLE and secreting them for use in a later hand is one of the more common methods of cheating. Mechanical contraptions called holdouts have been commercially available to the cardsharpener for a long time. One of the best was designed in 1888 by P. J. "Lucky Dutchman" Kepplinger, a burly San Francisco sharper who had gold jewelry, iron nerves, and brass balls.

Kepplinger's device was an elaborate thing with all sorts of pulleys, wheels, strings, and tubes running underneath his clothing—but it worked. When Kepplinger had it strapped on, he could operate pincers in and out of his cuff merely by spreading his knees a bit. The device was noiseless. It required no unnatural movements, whereas to operate some of the pneumatic holdouts of the period one almost had to flap like a duck.

Kepplinger's undoing came about because of his daring. Seeing no sport in fleecing lambs, he preferred to cheat other professionals! And, lacking the patience to wait



Three gamblers discover P. J. "Lucky Dutchman" Kepplinger's holdout machine in San Francisco.

for big pots, Kepplinger wanted to practice his wiles on every hand. One night several of his knowledgeable opponents became so convinced that he was screwing them, and so perplexed over how he was doing it, that they ganged up on him. Pretending to leave the room, one of the gamblers worked around behind Kepplinger and grabbed him around the chest. They gagged him and poked around his body until they discovered the holdout. A big man, Kepplinger put up a good fight, but the holdout was discovered. Amazed by the mechanics of the thing, the other gamblers agreed to protect Kepplinger's secret—provided that he would fit them with similar holdouts.

Sometime later, however, one of the sharpers was picked up during a routine gambling raid in Chicago. His request to change his shirt aroused the suspicion of a cop, who hauled him in and discovered the machine. The Chicago newspapers got

hold of the story and the secret was out to the world. Instead of exposing the gaff and thereby curtailing its use, however, the publicity ushered in the golden age of the holdout!

A few years later, several variations of the Kepplinger machine were being manufactured by the gaff supply houses (which was legal because the U.S. Patent Office offers no protection to inventors of gambling devices). In 1894, John Nevil Maskelyne devoted a long chapter to holdouts in his *Sharps and Flats*. In addition to the holdout text, Maskelyne had another chapter that contained excerpts from a New York gaff-supply catalog.

Here are some of the holdouts that were listed:

The latest sleeve holdout. *The finest machine in this country. All late improvements, better made than some machines that are sold for \$300. A better machine than the Kepplinger, or San Francisco, holdout. Made of fine and light pen steel, and works as well in shirt sleeves as with a coat on. The machine is fastened in a double shirt sleeve. The cards go in between the wristband and cuff. The wristband and cuff closes up when the cards are in, and anybody may look up your sleeve to your elbow and cannot see anything wrong. The holdout is worked by spreading your knees. The strings run through steel tubing that has capped pulley wheels. The string cannot bind or catch, and will work smoothly, easy, and noiselessly, every time alike. Give length of arm and size of shirt worn when ordering. Price, \$100. Will send one C.O.D. \$75, with privilege to examine, on receipt of \$25.*

Kepplinger vest, or coat machine. *New, never before advertised. Made on same principle as the sleeve holdout, and works by spreading knees. String goes through adjustable tubing. Vest closes up tight when cards are in, and looks to be all buttoned up tight. Works equally well in coat. (This is almost a nickle-in-slot machine, and I will guarantee perfect satisfaction to anyone that wants a first-class vest or coat holdout.) Send in vest all ready to put on and work. Price, \$75. Will send one C.O.D. \$60, privilege to examine and try in express office, on receipt of \$15.*

(I can just see some local sharper trying on a holdout down at the local express office before making the C.O.D. payment! But the image can be overworked, and I have omitted the offer from the rest of the entries.)

Stud-poker holdout. Very light and compact, works under any ordinary cuff. Cards come out to palm of hand and go back out of sight. Works automatically by resting arm on edge of table. Also a good machine to cap the deck with.

Arm-pressure vest machine. This machine weighs about three ounces, and is used half way down the vest, where it comes natural to hold your hands and cards. The work is done with one hand and the lower part of the same arm. You press against a small lever with the arm (an easy pressure of three-quarters of an inch throws out the cards back of a few others held in your left hand), and you can reach over to your checks or do anything else with the right hand while working the holdout. The motions are all natural, and do not cause suspicion. The machine is held in place by a web belt; you don't have to sew anything fast, but when you are ready to play you can put on the machine, and when through can remove it in half a minute. There are no plates, no strings to pull, and no springs that are liable to break or get out of order. This machine is worth fifty of the old style vest plates for practical use, and you will say the same after seeing one.

Arm-pressure sleeve machine. Same price and style as the arm-pressure vest machine. (This holdout is the lightest and smoothest working arm-pressure sleeve holdout made.)

Ten-dollar sleeve holdout. Light and compact, can be put on or taken off in two minutes, works by raising or lowering your arm. A good machine for small games.

Automatic table holdout. Lightest made, fastens by patent steel claw. Can be put under a table and taken off instantly, as there are no screws or anything to fasten permanently. Works by knee, and brings the cards up on top of the table. Notice: I can make this holdout or my stud-poker holdout, either one, to work a fine reflector for reading the cards, at same price.

Cuff holdout. Weighs two ounces, and is a neat invention to top the deck, to help a partner, or hold out a card playing stud poker; also good to play the half stock in seven up. This holdout works in the shirt sleeve, and holds the cards in the same place as a cuff pocket. There is no part of the holdout in sight at any time. A man that has worked a pocket will appreciate this invention.

Ring holdout. Fits under any ring worn on third finger. A fine thing to top the deck. You can hold as many cards as you wish in your hand, and no one will mistrust you, as your fingers will be at perfect liberty, and it is not necessary to keep them together as you have to do when palming.

Table holdout. Very small and light. It can be put under and removed from any table in less than half a minute. Works easily from either knee. It will bring three or more cards up into your hand, and take back the discards as you hold your cards and hands in a natural position on top of the table. It is the best table holdout made.

The bug. A little instrument, easily carried in your vest pocket, that can be used at a moment's notice to hold out one or more cards in any game. Simple, yet safe and sure.

Still in use today, the bug consists mainly of a watch spring or some similar component. It is fixed in a base, which in turn is attached to the underside of the gaming table, usually by a suction cup or some pointed instrument such as a shoemaker's awl. To use the bug, the sharper holds his cards near the edge of the table. Using his hands for cover, he can work a card into the bug with one thumb; that is, he slides it between the spring and the underside of the table, and of course he can remove it just as easily.

In addition to the holdouts described above, several types of gaming tables were designed or modified for holding out cards. Some had secret slots here or there, and, believe it or not, at least two designs permitted a sharper to pass a card to a confederate sitting across the table. One of these designs had a slot running underneath the table, which worked fine if the two sharpers could get the right seating arrangement. The other type worked independent of position at the table. It was rigged with a sort of hidden, upside-down Lazy Susan that permitted the sharper to insert an ace or two into a slot and rotate it around to his partner!

Although their heyday has definitely passed, holdouts of all manner are still around. They range in complexity from the elaborate Kepplinger-type machine shown in Figure 63 to the simple device shown in Figure 64. Holdouts of the latter sort are used primarily for keeping cold decks on ice until they can be run into play.

I saw one blundering cold-decker in Huntsville, Alabama, who needed one badly! Wearing a sports coat for cover, this character was keeping a cold deck behind a row of cigars in his shirt pocket. Just after the cut for his deal, his older and tougher buddy asked for a cigar. He also brought out a pint of booze and started waving it around. The dealer's face, poor guy, showed that the moment of truth was upon him. He reached into his shirt pocket while holding the deck. Hand and cards moved around under his coat like a squirrel. Finally, he brought out a cigar and the cold deck.

I was under the gun and he dealt me a seventy-four (we were playing lowball poker). Slowly I turned my cards face up, one by one, so that every man at the table could see that I was passing a betting hand.



Figure 63



Figure 64

Then I left the room without a word. The guy who was in charge of the game while the regular houseman took a break watched me as I left. Maybe he knew I was going to the boss.

Up front, I told the houseman what had happened. He laughed and said that he would speak to the cheats, but that he didn't want to bar them because they dumped a lot of money in Huntsville. We agreed that no one would get taken on the hand, especially not after I had all but exposed it. But we were incorrect on making this assumption. One numbskull dropped a bundle on a sixty-five. The dealer's buddy held a pat sixty-four and a cigar. Anyhow, the cheaters might have gotten action from more than one player if the dealer had used some sort of pin-on holdout instead of trying to switch the decks inside his shirt pocket!

Although holdouts are quite useful in cardsharpping, most professionals will avoid using them simply because they are undeniable evidence of cheating. Sharpers who operate by holding out cards will prefer to do so without mechanical gadgets on their

person or affixed to the table. There are several related tricks and sleights, but most of the holdout sharpers operate by palming cards.

When done by an ordinary cheat, palming is relatively easy to spot. The cheat's hand will be as curved as a boomerang and just as stiff. His fingers will be close together, and the meat just above the crotch of his thumb will bulge up like a small Virginia ham. But the expert, after years of practice, can palm a card in a relaxed hand. He can make a bet, or even shuffle the deck, while holding palmed cards. (Riverboat gambler George Devol claimed that he could palm a complete deck while shuffling another!) Palming "grips" vary somewhat, but the sharper has more freedom of movement if the card (or cards) is held between the little finger and the thumb.

The expert can palm cards from either the top or the bottom of the deck while he is dealing or shuffling; these are known as action palms. He can also palm while the deck is on the table, if he can find reason to pass his hand over the cards. There are dozens of variations, but most dealers palm when they square up the deck for the deal (bottom palm, Figure 65) or when cutting the deck (top palm, Figure 66).

I would say, however, that far more palming takes place from the cheat's hand, not directly from the deck. Figure 67 shows a cheat palming an ace in draw poker, just before he throws what's left of his hand into the deadwood. After the cheat palms a card in this manner, he will usually get it off the table until it is needed in a subsequent hand. It is of course possible to hold out, or save up, an entire hand.

Obviously, palming and holding out must be accompanied by other moves in order for the cheat to make use of the stolen cards, to end up with the proper number of cards in his hand, and to get all the cards back into play before someone starts counting the deck. Here are some techniques, tricks, and terms used in connection with palming:

Going south. The act of removing cards from the table is called going south.

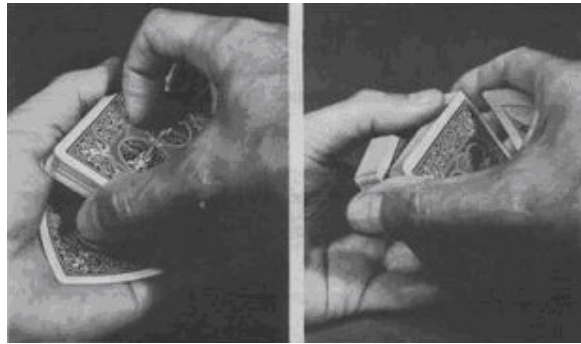


Figure 65

Figure 66

After palming or otherwise stealing a card, the cheat can tuck it under his thigh, in the bend of his knee, under his armpit, in the collar behind his neck, or in his sock. (Remember the Teacher from Chapter 2? A friend of mine stood behind him one night and told me later that he is awfully fast on the sock draw!) The sharper can also use one of the various holdouts. One of the neatest tricks is simply to thumb-hold the card under the edge of the table, as shown in Figure 68.

The hole-card switch. In stud poker, blackjack, and chemin de fer, players normally leave their cards on the table instead of picking them up in their hand. Even so, there are several ways of switching a held-out card for the hole card! Card detective Frank Garcia says he knows eight ways and that Dai Vernon showed him seventeen hole-card switches! The variations notwithstanding, the typical switch goes something like this:

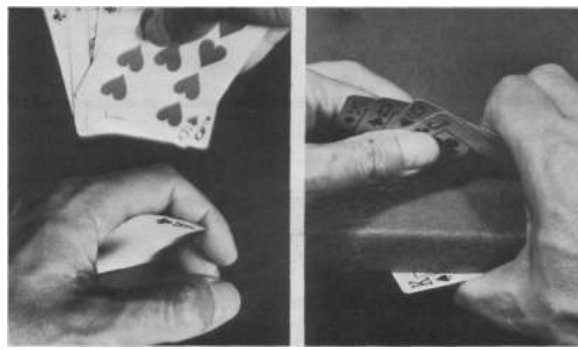


Figure 67

Figure 68

The cheat holds out an ace (or some key card) in five-card stud. When he catches an ace up, he palms the held-out ace face down in the right hand. Now he covers his hole card with his right hand, spreading the fingers so that the back of the palmed card shows, thereby making it appear to be his hole card. He pulls both cards to the edge of the table and drops his hole card into his lap while pretending to look at the one he had palmed.

Another method is for the cheat to bend his legitimate hole card slightly upward. Then he slips the palmed card under it and palms off the legitimate hole card.

To detect either of the above methods, watch the guy who completely covers his hole card with his hands. And of course watch the player who pulls his hole card to the edge of the table.

A two-handed switch, called the Chicago move because it was taught in that city's school for mechanics, is one of the most deceptive methods. The cheat palms the held-out card in his right hand face up. He picks up the real hole card with his left hand, while bringing his right hand in, making a more or less natural move to shield his hole card. He pushes the hole card into his right hand and takes hold of the palmed card. Then he lays the palmed card down and goes south with his hole card. These moves are shown in Figures 69, 70, and 71.

Double dealing. Some cheats operate not by holding cards out of play but by dealing themselves additional cards. In gin rummy, for example, such a cheat might end up with thirteen or fourteen cards in his hand instead of the usual ten.

Double dealing is quite easy for an accomplished second dealer, since he is practiced in starting two cards off the top of the deck; to double-deal, he merely takes hold of both cards and puts them on his hand. (This move is often called the push-off.) Note that some cheats who are not skilled enough to deal seconds can nevertheless double-deal in the same manner.



Figure 69



Figure 70

The cellar man has more problems than a second dealer, but he can double-deal by taking both the top and the bottom card for the serve.

Skinning the hand. When a cheat ends up with too many cards in his hand, either by holding out or by double-dealing, he must get rid of the surplus before the showdown. This is called skinning the hand.

Usually, the sharper can palm the cards onto the top of the deck, or, in poker, he can deposit them on the discards. He'll do this when moving the deck or discards from one place to another, as shown in Figure 72. Often he will palm off cards when he



Figure 71



Figure 72

picks up the deck for the next round of dealing, as in draw poker; he simply puts them on top, as in Figure 73, and then deals them out to his opponents. (The same trick can be used to get a specific card or cards, as requested by signals, to an accomplice sitting on his immediate left.) He can also go south with the unwanted cards and then run them in later.

The neatest method of skinning I've ever heard of may be a new trick in the sharper's bag. At least I've never seen it in print, and I had never even heard of it until a good friend of mine wrote me about it being used in a game at his place. Here's the scoop:

I know we have spoken together of the advantages the honest player gets from



Figure 73

plastic cards. Well—here's something you should know if you don't already!

One day I received a telephone call during a game: "This is Jake, the blackest sonofabitch in town! Could I come over and play with you? You wouldn't mind?" Well, I knew that Jake had been playing quite often in the big game, though I had never played with him. Fred, who ran the big game, had dug him up and reported him as somewhat of a pigeon. "Sure, come on over," I said. Subsequent investigation proved that one of the bellboys put him onto our scent, instead of one of my players, some of whom had played with him.

Jake proved to be anything but a pigeon. He could play any game with facility, even high-low split and Hold Me Darling. He started piling the money. Overnight most of the players fell out, leaving mostly me and Jim Brantley, a high roller from the big game who considers himself a champ at seven-card stud. So this he began to deal.

Jake proved that he was the new champ at seven-card stud. He kept coming up with the most magnificent hole cards imaginable. Poor Jim went to the bank for more money, paid me all I'd loaned him, and plowed in again—\$1,000, \$2,000, \$3,000.

Jake was playing without a shirt, bare from the waist up. No holdout paraphernalia. All on the square. But . . . I watched him pick up his hole cards and shuffle them in front of his face during one hand. Through the cracks in his fingers I saw what I'd swear was four or five cards. I was exceedingly startled and looked closely. He saw the look on my face, set his three cards on the table face up, and said, "Full house." I nearly went crazy trying to find the other two cards, and almost reached over and jiggled the cards in front of him. His hands and arms were clean, and he had dropped nothing, because I gave his cards my full attention. Those goddamn cards had just disappeared.

I passed Jim a note of warning, but Jake stayed only another five minutes.

I kept the puzzle in my mind all day, and turned it over to my subconscious to work on. About the time I started off to sleep the answer was fed back. Jake had been sticking the extra cards to the backs of the cards he showed!

Out of bed I came to give my idea a test. I got the old Kem cards out, put two of them in the palm of my hand, gave them a good tight squeeze, and laid them on the table. Lo—only one card. I tried it again and again, with hardly a miss. I could lay them down as a single card. Yet, they shuffled back into the deck perfectly. By adding a tad of saliva, I could practically cement them together temporarily. Anybody could do it! The only visible clue is an occasional temporary warp on the cards. This also disappears with the shuffle.

It turned out that the "blackest sonofabitch in town" had taken one of the players for \$1,000 the day before playing tonk, probably using the same technique. . . .

The best way to discourage a holdout artist is to count the cards from time to time. I have done just that in a number of games when the deck felt light, and more than once I have found the deck to be short a card or two. Usually, the missing card was found under the table. In most circles, counting the cards will not offend the honest players, but it is possible to count on the sly in some card games. In draw poker with seven players, for example, thirty-five cards will be dealt out before the draw. If ten cards are drawn by the active players, that would leave only seven cards to count.

The trouble with counting the cards is that finding the deck to be short will not put the finger on the holdout man. I am, however, always suspicious of the one who hitches his chair back or stands up before looking under the table. Still, it is usually difficult to catch a palm artist flat-handed; unless he wears a holdout, he can usually get rid of the card.

There is a story about a suspicious player who counted the deck while ham sandwiches were being distributed around the table. Suddenly he drew a .38 revolver and said, "Keep your hands on the table. The deck is short and I'm going to search everybody." The cheat was sitting across the table with the Ace Of Diamonds palmed in his left hand. Calmly he picked up his ham sandwich with both hands and palmed the ace between the lettuce and the top slice of bread. Then he ate it!

6. Copping And Counterfeiting

A GAMBLING FRIEND OF MINE told me about a tightwad player who bought the minimum stack of chips in a \$100-takeout poker game. He anted along for an hour or so without ever even playing a pot, much less winning one, and then cashed out \$124 worth of chips! I've heard several similar stories, and I don't doubt any of them. Copping chips is one of the more common methods of cheating at cards and gambling games.

In such games as poker and red dog, be suspicious of anyone who frequently counts the pot or otherwise finds an excuse to finger the chips. Watch especially the jolly player who seems happy when an opponent wins. If he "helps" the winner by pushing the chips or money across the table, he may be using some sort of chip cop. This is a goo or a liquid (often a magician's product) that sticks to the cheat's palm or fingers—and the chips stick to the goo. Several commercial preparations are available, or the cheat may make his own by heating and scraping the goo off household adhesive tape. I've also seen chips copped with the aid of a tape that is sticky on both sides, and a dab of sticky wax can be used under a ring, usually on the middle finger.

Some accomplished chip coppers need neither goo nor tape. They can palm or otherwise steal chips as shown in Figure 74. Some do this while holding their cards, as illustrated in Figures 75 and 76.

Large gambling casinos are sometimes worked by professional coppers, who will invariably station themselves next to a big winner with a large pile of chips. (This sort of thing was dramatized vividly in Fedor Dostoevski's short novel *The Gambler*.)



Figure 74



Figure 75



Figure 76

One such petty cheat who worked Monte Carlo specialized in stealing chips that dropped onto the floor. She used copping preparation on the bottom of her shoe! According to Gamblers Digest, a pit boss in Las Vegas detected a young lady copping from winners. He glued a pile of chips together and planted them at a table with a shill. Sure enough, the young lady tried to cop one—but came up with the whole pile. Exit one female chip copper.

More serious, from the casino's point of view, is the dealer who steals chips from the house. To help prevent this sort of thing, many casinos require dealers, croupiers, and other employees to wear special uniforms that have no pockets. During the 1930's, Monte Carlo experimented with using small gold coins instead of chips—only to find that too many croupiers had too many urges to scratch their necks. After that, they started using large chips, especially at big-money games like baccarat, in which the "chips" are almost as large as a slice of bread. Harolds Club in Reno uses a good many women dealers, and according to a book by Harold Smith, Sr., they had an employee with "nose trouble." The table was losing money, so Smith watched the girl closely. He discovered that each time she put her handkerchief to her nose and went to the ladies' room, she was stealing. After this, Smith made it a rule that when a female dealer left the game for any purpose, she had to dust her palms off.

Instead of trying to steal money, or chips, directly from the house, many dealers simply overpay a confederate who is playing against the house. One ingenious method of overpayment came to light quite recently in connection with an assassination contract to knock off a Nevada hotelman, who in turn had been indicted for "murder, attempted murder, burglary, and conspiracy." The victim of the murder was linked to the "hollow chip" cheating ring because a device used to cheat casinos was found in his home.

According to a UPI report datelined Las Vegas,

The device is a machined aluminium tube painted to look like a stack of casino chips with a real chip, usually of \$5 or \$10 denomination, glued to the top.

A dishonest casino dealer can slip two \$100 chips into the tube and give them to a confederate at the gaming tables. The transaction would appear to the casual observer to be a legitimate payoff to a winner at craps or blackjack.

Phil Hannifin, chairman of the state Gaming Control Board, said the cheating ring bilked a half dozen casinos of \$300,000 to \$400,000 during the last several weeks.

So ... copping chips is not necessarily in the rent-money category. Many private gambling sessions are conducted with chips instead of cash, and in some of these games the bank often checks up in the red. In other words, there are more chips out than the bank can recover. If this happens too frequently in your group to be marked off as error, there may be a simple answer. Consider the chips. Are they

the ordinary kind that can be matched at any drugstore? If so, someone may be ringing in a few bucks' worth during each session. The best solution to this problem, if it is a problem, is to mark the chips in some way before each session. One method is to streak them with paint, a whole stack at the time, as shown in Figure 77. Whoever banks the game should do this at least a day before the action so that the paint will have time to dry.



Figure 77

And of course the markings should vary from session to session.

The large casinos have registered chips that are very, very difficult to duplicate. The fact is that it's often just as easy to counterfeit money as chips; it's more practical, too, since the money can be unloaded in more places.

Actually, private and illegal gambling sessions are popular with shovers of counterfeit money. Who, for example, looks very closely when fading two twenties in a skull-craps game? Another point is that anyone who gets stuck with counterfeit money in an illegal gambling game is reluctant to report it or to pinpoint the source.

In total volume, most of the counterfeit money is passed in private and illegal games, but the casinos do have their problems. Once two English spinsters dumped 300,000 counterfeit francs on Monte Carlo over a period of several days. The trick was to buy chips with the counterfeit money. If they lost, so what? If they won, they would ask the casino to hold the money for safekeeping. When they finally cashed out, they got 189,000 francs and headed for Cape Town, where they were arrested. The 189,000 francs, however, was not all profit. About half of it had been paid to them in their own counterfeit francs!

PART TWO: WHATS YOUR GAME

It ain't gambling if you play gin and pick up pat hands or if you roll the right dice. It's business.

-A GAMBLER

7. Poker

THE GAMUT OF SLICK DEALING, crooked gadgets, gaffs, and subterfuges set forth in Part One can be applied to poker, and poker games have been used in many of the examples in previous chapters. Part One will not be rewritten here, but, before going on to some ruses worked only (or mostly) in poker, I would like to reiterate a few major points:

1. In stud poker, watch especially for second dealers, peek artists, and marked cards. Watch also for the haymaker stack.
2. In draw poker, watch for the bottom dealers. And beware the cold deck.
3. In such widow games as Hold Me Darling, watch for the locators. They may be memorizing a run of cards while shuffling, while another player shuffles, or from the discards. It is debatable whether such observations can be called out right cheating, but the moment a locator starts arranging cards in order, or alters his shuffle to keep the stock in order, or cuts the deck so that his memorized stock will turn up in the widow—then he is definitely cheating.
4. In all poker, watch the man who rummages through the discards. Nobody has any real business in the discard pile.
5. It is seldom advisable to play poker with strangers. If you do, be suspicious of a very good hand when playing on an ocean cruise or in some such short-term game—and be especially wary if the stakes have been raised or the limit removed.
6. Watch out for belly strippers, especially in two-handed poker, where the stripping is usually done on the sucker's deal. Consider cards humped so that 3-3-3, 8-8-8, and Q-Q-Q will strip out on the cut. Before the draw, one or the other of the players will catch at least two pairs. Sometimes one player will have triplets and the other will have either triplets or a full house. The cheat, of course, knows what the sucker holds, so that he won't lose much money when he is beaten on these stripped-out hands. For example, the sharper holds 3-3-3-8-X, which means that the dealer must hold Q-Q-Q-8-8. So the sharper would fold without investing anything except his ante. But if he held 8-8-8-Q-3, the victim would have to hold Q-Q-3-3-X, and the sharper would raise.

Poker is played in many ways and forms, for all manner of stakes, and by different codes of conduct. Poker is, in fact, a good many games. What is considered to be cheating in one group may be part of pokermanship in another group. Once I played in a game where improving one's hand from the discards, or even from another player's hand, was considered to be great fun; in other groups, anyone who reaches for a discard is liable to draw back a bloody nub!

Generally, I believe that more cheating goes on at poker than at other card games, owing in part to poker's diverse nature, its reputation as a gambling game, and its unsnobbish mix of players from all levels of society. So ... reread Part One and add the following points to the list of things to watch for:

The cross-lift. Brother-in-law poker, as the cross-lift is sometimes called, is one of the more common methods of cheating in draw, stud, Cincinnati Liz, and all other forms. The system requires two players in cahoots. Call these players A and B. Player A has a very good hand and bets. Player C, the victim, calls on a good hand. Player B raises—on nothing; he has received a signal from A and his sole purpose in raising is to build the pot. Thus, player C is in a sort of whip-saw (which is another name for the cross-lift).

One way to guard against the cross-lift is to insist on the rule that all active players show their hand at the showdown. In other words, if player A bets, C calls, and B raises, player C has every right to see both A's and B's hand if he calls the raise. (An exception would be in a case where player A reraised, C called, and B folded.) Of

course, player B can always say that he had been bluffing, but the cross-lift can be detected or inferred beyond a reasonable doubt over a period of time. One tip-off is that the cheats working the cross-lift will often appear to be at each other's throats, taking offense at each other's raises and exchanging such threats as "If you open I'm going to raise you out of your seat."

The spread. A method of cheating in which the sharper must have a confederate and a set of signals, the spread is best explained by example. Say one cheat holds a diamond fourflush. He asks his confederate, by signal, whether he has a diamond in his hand. If the confederate does have one, the cheat proceeds to get rid of his off-suit card by palming it onto the discards (no doubt while pretending to push the discards to one side), by copping it with a holdout device, or by palming it off in one way or another. His confederate, meanwhile, will be palming the diamond in his own hand with its face to his skin.

At the showdown, the cheat says, "Flush!" He slaps his cards—only four—onto the table face up but in a packet, so that only the top diamond shows.

Quickly saying something like, "Seeing is believing," the confederate reaches out to spread the cards. During this move he deposits the palmed fifth card (diamond) onto the poker hand. (If he's good enough he can get it under the other diamonds.) During his confederate's move, the cheat will probably be reaching dramatically for the pot to help distract attention from the spread.

Although the spread is usually worked with flushes, it can be used to fill a straight or a full house. Watch for it.

The discard switch. Here's a neat move that was described by an old cardsharp in an interview with *Gambler's Digest*:

In draw poker, you noted the cards in your discard and remembered them in order. Since you were the dealer, your discard cards went on top of the discard pile. You usually used the move when all you had was a pair. You dealt yourself three cards after discarding. If one of them matched with one or more of the cards in your discard, you gathered up the discard pile before you added your new cards to the two you held, holding your draw between the right thumb and forefinger and the discard pile between your other fingers and your palm. In making a move to throw the discard pile aside, you switched one or two of your draw cards for one or two of the cards you had just discarded. Your hand was making a broad, sweeping motion in tossing the discards aside, and the card switch was a very small motion. Done with any speed at all, it was impossible to detect. If anyone had accused me of doing it, I'd have invited him to try such a thing and he'd have decided his accusation was completely ridiculous. I've gotten many a full house or two pairs with that move and I was always tempted to use it, even when I didn't need to, because I like it so much.

He added, "When you can make up your hand from eight cards instead of five, it gives you somewhat of an advantage over your opponents!"

Fourflushers. Petty cheats who try (and too often succeed) to pass four cards of a suit off as a flush are called fourflushers. They usually do their trick with all red or all black cards, such as four diamonds and one heart. Notice in Figure 78 that the Q♦ partly hides the J♥. Some fourflushers, when calling their hand, do not say that it is a flush; instead, they say, "All red," "All pink," or, "All black." If challenged, they pass it off as a joke. If unchallenged, they push the fourflush into the deadwood and rake in the pot.



Figure 78

Two-fisting. Seven-card stud high-low may well be the most popular poker game in America today, at least in the typical dealer's-choice session. Almost any poker game can be played high-low, where the best and worst hands split the pot 50-50. In more and more poker groups, the players have to declare simultaneously whether they are playing for high or low or perhaps both ways. This declaration is usually accomplished by each player concealing a certain number of chips or coins in his hand, and then all players opening up their fists at the same time. (In some groups, one chip stands for low; two, for high; three, for both ways. In other groups, no chips stands for low; one, for high; and two, for both ways.)

If you play the chip-declare form of high-low, make sure that all the contenders have only one fist on the table! A cheat can have one hand set for low and the other for high, then open up according to the way his opponents declare. This ruse may seem too obvious to be worked successfully, but those high-low pots tend to run big, and the declaration is so much the moment of truth that excitement runs high.

Hole-card flip. There is one form of subterfuge that I, for one, like to encounter! Some stud players will switch their hole card for an up card, especially in loose, disorderly games with a lot of chatter and tomfoolery at the table. If such a player holds an 8-spot and a king, there is a definite advantage in having the king down. Players who do the flip will usually pick their cards up in both hands, then flip them over when they put them down again. I don't as a rule call a player on this one, since I figure that I have an advantage by knowing his hole card!

Whose ante? I've played in very few poker games in which the players anted properly. This usually causes much bickering at the table about who's up and who's not. I've seen some honest players ante twice just to get the game going—which is exactly what the petty cheat wants. The way to stop this is to have everyone ante in turn and keep his ante in front of him instead of tossing the antes into a common pile. Personally, I prefer for the dealer to ante for everybody. For example, if the ante is prorated at 25¢ per player in an eight-handed game, the dealer puts in \$2. This averages out, is fair for everyone, keeps the pot right, and helps the players remember whose turn it is to deal.

Playing light. A number of petty cheats profit by playing light in the pot at every opportunity. Playing light occurs when a player doesn't have enough money on the table to make or call a bet and is allowed to owe money to the pot. To keep track of what he owes, the short player pulls the amount of his bet out of the pot and piles it aside.

Some cheats pile lights close to the main pot, and often, after the hand progresses and the pot grows, it will be raked in with the pot by the winner and the cheat will say

nothing. This method is more effective when the cheat played light during the early rounds and dropped out of play during the latter rounds.

Other cheats pile lights in front of them and keep it if unchallenged. Again, this method works best when the cheat drops out early. Such a cheat doesn't have to win the pot to make money. Note that when he pulls \$5 light and keeps it, he has cheated the winner out of \$10—the \$5 he owes to the pot plus the \$5 he took out.

I've seen some players who pulled light early during the hand actually start playing out of their lights during the latter rounds of betting!

This sort of stealing often goes unnoticed in loose, wild games with lots of players. The best way to stop it is to insist that the pot be kept right at all times. If a player can make good his lights, he can also get money or chips to put into the pot.

Two tens for a five. A game in which each player counts out his own bets and calls, and makes his own change from the pot, poker offers many opportunities for the quick-change artist, if that's the term for a guy who calls a \$2 bet with a \$5 bill and pulls two singles and a 10-spot for his change!

A similar trick—and one that is quite common—is to shortchange on a bet. For example, the cheat rapidly counts out thirteen \$1 bills, tosses them into the pot, and announces a \$15 bet.

The way to curtail this sort of thing is to have each player put all his bets and calls in a separate pile, preferably in a circle drawn on the table in front of each seat. Thus, each active player should have the same amount of money in his circle at the end of each round of betting.

Bad checks. Gambling debts and bad checks are discussed in Part Three. I bring them up here because poker players often get stuck with bad checks that they did not cash and may not have wanted. It's not fair for player A to cash B's check and then play it in a pot against C. The way to avoid this is to play with cash, or with chips that are backed by cash. Any player who wants to get a check cashed should put it on a personal basis, man-to-man, with another player. Then the player who cashes the check should put it into his pocket. That way, only whoever agrees to cash the check gets stuck with it.

The bad-check problem is usually worse in poker than in a game like gin rummy, where the nature of the game puts checks on a person-to-person basis.

Hoyle doesn't say. Unfortunately, there are no official rules for poker. One problem is that poker changes so fast, and there are so many different dealer's-choice games, that no "official" rule book could ever keep up with new variations. Poker clubs and "house" games usually have fairly standard rules, either written or unwritten, that are observed by their clientele.

Anyone who plays a lot of poker around the country, however, will be cheated, sooner or later, on some point of rule. Here's what happened to me in a house game. The dealer called lowball. After the draw, I held 6-4-3-2-A and bet \$20, which was about the size of the pot at that time. Another player—call him B as in Bastard—called my bet. Everyone else folded except the dealer, who raised \$30. I raised another \$50, and would have tapped at that point if B had not been in. Player B could call only about \$45 of the raise. He counted out his bills and put them in, leaving a quarter in change. Just as B dropped his bills into the pot, the dealer raised again—and player B took his money out on the grounds that he hadn't finished calling the bet. He still had money in front of him—25¢. I had seen the quarter off to the side of his stack, but it hadn't occurred to me that I, or the dealer, should have insisted that he put

it into the pot. If we had insisted, B would no doubt have squawked about having to put his last two bits into the pot!

I asked the guy to put the \$45 back into the pot, and the dealer also asked him. But B insisted that he had not finished calling and that the dealer had raised out of turn. The houseman would not overrule him, although he had obviously pulled a slick one. As far as I was concerned, he had stolen \$45 from me—and, in fact, had cost me a good deal more. I was so mad that I forgot to tap the dealer out, and he would have called his whole stack on his 6-5-4-2-A! A few months later, another player told me about being taken on the same trick in that same game.

The only advice I can give in a case like this is not to play in a house game where the operator will allow such goings-on. A good houseman will be firm in his dealings with shady players and will usually return any money that a reputable player loses on some contrived interpretation of the rules.

Personally, I don't like some of the rules in the poker houses around Gardenia, California, but I am very much in favor of their ruling on bets and calls: "A short bet or call must be completed or forfeited. If a player acting in turn releases checks on the table with a forward motion of the hand, it constitutes a bet or call."

I'm still mad about that \$45, but it was nothing as compared to the poor guy who, as the story goes, was taken in some Western saloon by the loo-loo or lalapalooza hand. The victim makes four aces and bets high. At the showdown, his opponent shows something like 4-7-10-J-K, calls it a lalapalooza, and rakes in the pot.

The victim protests, but the other players point to a sign over the bar. Sure enough, the sign said that a lalapalooza beats four aces.

Hours later, the victim himself catches 4-7-10-J-K— a genuine lalapalooza—and bets the grub-stake money. At the showdown, his opponent points to the sign over the bar: Only one lalapalooza a night!

8. Blackjack

BLACKJACK IS A DEALER'S GAME—and in more ways than one. In casino blackjack, or twenty-one, the deal remains fixed and all players are against the house. In private blackjack, the deal may skip from player to player throughout the session, but invariably some players will deal more than others. (Usually, the player who blackjacks gets the deal, but in most private sessions he may sell it to the highest bidder.) In either the casino or the private version, blackjack is an easy game for the sharper because so much depends on so few cards. Also, it's a very fast game, as compared to bridge or even poker, thereby giving the dealer more opportunities to cheat in a given length of time.

The question of cheating in licensed casinos will be discussed in some detail later. Generally, however, the large licensed casinos of Nevada and elsewhere are honest, but note that a crooked dealer may work unbeknown to the house. Because it is difficult for a dishonest dealer to steal money or chips off the table, he, or she, will usually cheat player A and let player B win. Then player B, called an agent, will later split his winnings with the dealer. But usually casino dealers and management are honest, or at least play honestly. To cheat would be ultimately unsound business for the house and would be a threat to the dealer's job. Although there is no denying the fact that cheating has occurred in Nevada casinos and that most of the cheating complaints received by the Nevada Gaming Control Board have involved blackjack, it is still my opinion that the average player has a much better chance in a licensed casino than in an illegal joint or even in the Friday-night blackjack session down at the local animal club.

In recent years the computer boys have come up with card-counting systems to beat the dealer. These systems will give a player a slight edge over the house, if one can

indeed keep track of the cards that have been played and if the dealer will let the deck become sufficiently depleted. What all this amounts to is that the more aces and 10-count cards there are in the deck, the better the player's chances of winning bonus payment on a blackjack; the more low cards there are, the worse the player's chances. Because of the card counters, the casinos, or at least some of them, are using two or more decks (which in itself reduces the player's chances slightly). Also, the rules and methods of dealing blackjack are currently in a state of change. Some casinos, for example, are now dealing all the player's cards face up, which is fair enough, really, because the dealer must hit 16 or under but cannot hit 17 or over.

Because the rules do vary from licensed casino to licensed casino, illegal game to illegal game, and private session to private session, it is difficult to be specific about the methods of cheating. A particular method of cheating may be applicable in one game but not in another.

I am certain, however, that no blackjack player, no matter how skilled he may be at card-counting techniques or in money management, can possibly beat a slick second dealer who holds a single deck in his hands. For this reason, I am in favor of multideck play and the use of a multideck dealing shoe. Although shoes and boxes can be gaffed to deal seconds, this and other forms of second dealing in blackjack can be stopped by using red and blue decks mixed together, as John Scarne and others have suggested.

There are a number of ways to cheat at blackjack, but hand-in and hand-out second dealing is one of the most deadly. An obvious case is when the dealer holds, say, 10-5 and a 6 is on top of the deck; he simply deals seconds to all the players who take hits, thereby saving the desirable top card for himself. In an illegal joint, the dealer may often use marked cards, but second dealers in most licensed casinos will peek at the top card instead of resorting to paperwork, which could cost the casino its license and get the dealer's name on the unemployment list.

Ways to detect seconds, peeking, and marked cards have been discussed at length in previous chapters, but let me repeat and emphasize a point here: WATCH THE DEALER'S EYES. No second dealer is effective unless he knows the top card, and unless he has a stacked deck, he has to peek, read marked cards, or use a shiner.

In addition to watching the dealer's eyes, be suspicious of any blackjack dealer who checks his down card, or pretends to, when he has no need to do so; actually, the dealer has no reason to look at his own hand before all the players have either hit or stood, unless he has a 10-count or an ace showing (in which case he might have a blackjack). Finally, be highly suspicious of any casino or illegal gambling joint that does not make it mandatory for the dealer to hit 16 or under and stand on 17 or over.

Also watch for the following cheating techniques and tricks that are used at blackjack:

Anchor man. It is quite convenient for a crooked blackjack dealer to have a confederate sitting on his immediate right. Called an anchor man, this shill can hit or stand according to signals from the dealer; his purpose is not to improve his own hand but to take undesirable cards off the top of the deck as an aid to the dealer. For example, the dealer has a 15-count and a 9-spot is on top of the deck. The anchor man takes a hit, thereby removing the undesirable card and giving the dealer a chance for a more favorable card. If a quick peek reveals that the new top card is also a bustout number, the dealer may signal the anchor man to take still another hit!

Note that the dealer who has an anchor man need not be accomplished at dealing seconds, but he must either peek or have marked cards.

A variation is to have the anchor man sitting on a player's right. If the dealer does not want the player to have the top card, he signals for the anchor man to hit; if the dealer does want the player to have the top card, he signals for the anchor man to

stand. On some hands this option doesn't mean much to the dealer, but it is very effective whenever the player doubles down or splits.

Some casinos that have switched to multidecks are now dealing all the players' cards face up. This limits the flexibility of an anchor man. He can't often hit 18, for example, without causing some raised eyebrows, and he can't hit a hard 27 without sending the players in search of another game!

Short deck. The odds can be altered significantly in favor of the dealer if some of the aces and 10-count cards are removed from the deck. This reduces the player's chances of making a blackjack, which, if untied, wins the player extra payoff money. Disregarding the burned card, the probability of catching an untied blackjack with a fifty-two-card deck is 0.0465; with one of the aces removed, the probability is reduced to 0.0367. The more aces and 10-count cards that are removed, the fewer are the player's chances of making a blackjack.

Long deck. The odds can also be altered significantly in favor of the dealer if more pip cards are added to the deck. But this is dangerous for the house because some player might not take too kindly to catching a 12-count with two ♦6's! The danger of being detected, however, is reduced in multideck play.

Burning the aces. It is customary in both casino and private blackjack to burn or bury a card face up on the bottom of the deck just after a new shuffle. In private blackjack, some players follow a rule that no 10-count card or ace can be burned, but most casinos have no such rules. If the dealer can burn a 10-count card or an ace, the house's percentage is increased slightly, as explained above under "Short deck." So, when some dealers shuffle, they work an ace into position and crimp the cards above it so that an honest player is likely to cut to it, thereby leaving the ace or 10-count on top to be burned.

In games where the deck may be reshuffled before the end or where the dealer cannot serve the last card, the same effect can be achieved by working an ace to the bottom of the deck.

The turnover. In most private games and in a lot of casinos, the dealer usually puts the played cards face up on the bottom of the deck. At times the crooked dealer will turn the deck over and start dealing from the bottom portion; in other words, he will deal out the cards that have just been played. Some dealers will "turn over" when the deck is about half depleted because he notices that a good many cards that have been played are low—which means that the second half of the deck would shift the odds in favor of the players because of the increased probability of a blackjack. At other times, the crooked dealer will turn over to make use of a pickup stack, which will be discussed later.

The turnover is a little dangerous for the dealer because someone may recognize a card that was played during the previous hand. Most players, however, are not that observant, and, besides, it would be the player's word against the dealer's.

New trends in casino blackjack, such as dealing all the player's cards face up and using dealing boxes or shoes for multideck play, are expected to stop extensive use of the turnover. But the ruse will no doubt be around for a long time in private games and in illegal house games. One way to stop it everywhere is to have the dealer leave the played cards face down on the table instead of burning them. This practice is being adopted in some licensed casinos.

Low-high-low stack. In his *Beat the Dealer*, Edward O. Thorp went into some detail on how a particular casino dealer, who used four decks and a dealing shoe, was

picking up the cards in low-high order, as in 8-Q, 9-K, 6-J, 5-A, and then false-shuffling the cards. Note that with the stack in the example the dealer would get 20 (with Q-K) on the first hand and blackjack (with J-A) on the second hand if he had only one player at the table. Thorp said, "I have since found the high-low pickup is also being used at many, many other casinos. In my judgment it is the most widespread single method of dealer cheating now in use."

Such a stack is usually made when the dealer picks up the cards from the players at the end of a round of play, and it is called the pickup stack. The dealer puts the stack on the bottom, then turns the deck over. Also, a new deck can be pre-stacked in high-low order, in which case the dealer would false-shuffle.

The Kentucky step-up. Here's a neat stack in which the cards run 7-8-9-10-10-J-Q-K-A. In casinos, the stack is usually set up by a dealer when there are no players at his table. When the suckers sit down, the dealer false-shuffles and crimps the deck or makes a shift after the cut. Of course, the stack could also be set up in a new deck and run in during play.

Against a single opponent, the dealer gets 19 against 18 on the first hand; 21 against 20 on the second hand. (Remember that the top card, the 7, will be burned.) Against two opponents, the dealer gets 20 against 18 and 19. Against three opponents, the dealer gets 21 against 18, 19, and 20!

As well as getting the dealer off to a fine start, this stack reduces the player's chances on subsequent hands because it depletes the deck of one ace and five 10-count cards!

Apparently the Kentucky step-up was first used in Newport, Kentucky, which at one time was an illegal gambling center. If the story is true, the gambler who invented the stack tried to collect royalties from any casino that used it!

Insurance. In many casinos, a player who holds a blackjack may insure his hand when the dealer shows an ace or a 10-count card. The dealer should ask before he looks at his down card whether the player wants insurance. Some dealers who look first forget to ask about it when they hold blackjack, and others try to coax the player into taking out insurance when they do not hold blackjack. In almost all cases, the smart player will not take insurance under any circumstances because the odds are heavily in favor of the house.

Underpay. One of the cheapest methods of cheating occurs when the dealer underpays a player. Mistakes are bound to happen even in a Nevada casino, but Thorp reported that in the twenty-five such instances that he experienced the dealers always made mistakes that would benefit the house.

Overpay. One of the simplest ways in which a dealer and his agent team up against the house is the overpay. The dealer simply pays his agent more than the bet, and they split later. This sort of thing seems petty, but the "hollow chip" incident, related in Chapter 6, shows that a good deal of money can be involved.

Tipping the hand. Another simple way in which the dealer and his agent cheat the house occurs when the dealer makes some signal to indicate the value of his down card. Thus, the agent always knows whether or not to hit. Note, however, that the dealer cannot get away with this sort of simple cheating for extended lengths of time. The casino management knows approximately what a table should win, and the dealer who too often comes up short will lose his job. As a rule, any dealer in the large licensed casinos will have to cheat one player to pay off his buddy, so that the winnings for the house will average out on his shift.

In the techniques listed above, the dealer cheats the player for the benefit of the house or the dealer cheats the house (or another player) for the benefit of himself or his agent. It is also possible, but much more difficult, for the player to cheat the dealer.

Some players, known as crossroaders, mark cards with daubs, lipsticks, and some hair sprays. They also mark cards by nailing, bending, and so on. The advantage of having marked cards is that sometimes the player will know whether or not to hit because he knows the dealer's hole card or the top card on the deck. I've often wondered how some two-bit cheat would feel when hitting 17 because a daubed 4-spot showed on top of the deck—only to have a slick dealer swish him out a second!

Crossroaders can also beat the dealer by holding out cards, but this is more difficult in blackjack—especially casino blackjack—than in the run-of-the-mill poker session. Nevertheless, Frank Garcia related a fairly recent incident in which a sharper called Smoky Joe and three other crossroaders clipped a Lexington, Kentucky, gambling house for \$270,000 with a Kepplinger-type holdout!

9. Gin Rummy

GIN RUMMY IS A FINE GAME for both fun and profit, but, unfortunately, it is also a comparatively easy game in which to cheat. One big advantage for sharpers is that gin is a two-handed game. Thus, the sharper has only one opponent to deal with, a fact that reduces the chances of his being detected and, if he is detected, puts him on a man-to-man basis instead of having to take on a whole table, as in poker. Still another important point for the sharper is that a lot of big money is gambled at gin rummy. Moreover, it is a fairly safe game for illegal gambling because as a rule no money is on the table.

In an article published by a resort town's newspaper, a reporter estimated that gin racketeers collected more than \$2 million from wealthy visitors during one winter season! A Manhattan businessman was taken for \$80,000 during his week's stay. According to another source, an estimated 4,000 cardsharper were in town off and on during the season. Some of them ended up hustling each other!

A good many of the gaffs, sleights, and gadgets (such as marked cards) discussed in Part One can be applied quite easily to gin rummy. But be especially on the lookout for:

Signals. Never play gin for big money in the presence of kibitzers. It's just too easy for a sharper's accomplice to signal whether your unmelded point count is over 10, which information gives the cheat an unbeatable advantage against an honest player. No matter where you sit in a gin rummy session, remember that electronic gadgets can send signals from a spy out of the room to a sharper at the gaming table.

Missing cards. Few gin players realize the advantage that a sharper gains by knowing that a certain card is missing from the deck. Some sharpers may go south with a card, and others, as John Scarne has pointed out, merely leave an extra card in the box when the session begins.

Let's say, for example, that a sharper has removed the ♦7 from the deck. The result is that only one meld is possible with 7's, as compared to four three-card melds if all the 7's had been in play; also, removing the ♦7 eliminates all the following melds: ♦5-6-7, ♦6-7-8, and ♦7-8-9. Knowing that these melds are no longer possible, the sharper has three types of advantage:

First, he would know that his probability of filling 7-7-7 would be slim, and that his probability of making any meld with the ♦7 would be zero. Therefore, he would not play for a dead or improbable meld.

Second, his unknowing opponent might play for the missing melds, thereby severely reducing his chances of ginning and his opportunities to knock.

Third, the cheat would know that ♦5, ♦6, ♦8, and ♦9, as well as all the 7's, are relatively safe discards.

A holdout artist may remove a card at any time during play and may rotate a holdout card as the session goes along. If he is good, such a mechanic is difficult to detect and stop, but the lesser cheat who merely leaves a card in the box will be foiled if his opponent always makes a practice of counting the deck before play starts.

Peeking at the bottom card. For all practical purposes, the gin sharper who knows what card is on the bottom of the deck has the same advantage as the one who knows that a certain card is missing from the deck. On his shuffle and deal, the sharper may peek at the bottom card, as was explained in Chapter 1, or he may crimp a card so that he or his opponent will be likely to cut it off, thereby leaving it on the bottom when the deck is squared up for the deal. A single belly stripper can be used for the same purpose.

If a player exposes the bottom card during his shuffle or during the process of squaring up the deck, the sharper merely cuts thin so that the exposed card will be near the bottom of the deck. It is, therefore, especially important in gin rummy that the deck be shuffled properly. See the Appendix for a recommended procedure on shuffling, cutting, and so on.

The pickup. There are several ways in which a sharper may either stack the deck or form a stock when picking up the melds from a previous hand. A skilled bottom dealer, for example, can easily pick up a meld and retain it on the top or bottom; if the meld ends up on top, he will deal off the bottom to his opponent; if it ends up on the bottom, he'll deal off the top to his opponent and off the bottom to himself.

But one need not necessarily be a super mechanic to make use of stocks in gin rummy. Almost anyone can pick up a meld of, say, four 10's, put them on the bottom, and leave them there through a series of riffles. At the end of his shuffle, he makes a thin cut of about fifteen cards, thereby placing the meld that many cards up from the bottom. If his opponent now makes a normal half-deck cut, each player will receive two 10's during the deal. The cheat has a whopping advantage because he knows that his opponent has the other two 10s. He simply holds his, knowing that sooner or later his opponent will discard one. The opponent could put a kink in the plan by cutting too thin or too deep, but even so, the sharper will know the position of four cards in the stock.

Also watch for the butt-riffle method of stacking a deck, and be highly suspicious of the haymaker shuffle.

Strippers. I have a deck of belly strippers that were cut especially for gin rummy. With a little practice, anyone can strip out Q-Q-Q-Q and ♦7-8-9-10-J. The sharper can keep these cards on the bottom and deal them to himself. But anyone can get them on the bottom and let them fall where they may after the cut. Even with a random (alternating) distribution, the sharper will have a tremendous advantage because he knows which humps his opponent holds. It is also an advantage to hit this run in the stock, simply because the sharper knows pretty much which cards are coming off. Thus, he can hold and discard accordingly.

Note that strippers, which are available in any combination that the sharper chooses, are used more often in two-handed games like gin rummy than in full-table games like poker.

Mitting the hand. When drawing from the stock, a gin slicker can pick up two cards instead of one. He will usually do this during some distraction at the table. At the end of the hand, or at some point during play, he will palm off or go south with surplus cards, or else he will conceal them under a meld.

A slicker can also deal himself an extra card or two even before drawing from the stock. It is especially easy for a good second dealer to push off two cards instead of one.

The stock peek. One of the more common methods of cheating in gin rummy occurs when the sharper draws from the stock. A sharper can peek at the second card, as was shown in Figure 4. If his opponent then draws off the stock, the sharper knows what his card is; if his opponent draws from the discards, the sharper then knows the top card on the stock and will have a choice between it and his opponent's discard.

This sort of peeking can be inferred, but not proven, by watching the sharper's draw. If he hesitates slightly and looks at the stock, he may be peeking. Spreading the stock as shown in the Appendix will at least make it more difficult for the sharper to peek.

A related move, called the "Oops, sorry" technique, was set forth in *Bridge and Gin Gambitry*, by Clem Stein, Jr.:

When drawing from the pack, Al picks up three cards "by accident." He promptly expresses horror and shame at his clumsiness and replaces the cards in the middle of the stack, but not before he has had a good look at them. Figure this out mathematically: Suppose ten cards have been dealt each player, plus one turned up. That's 21 cards. Suppose further that 5 cards are already discarded. Half the pack is now gone, so that when Al gets a look at 3 cards (and puts them back) he knows the position of roughly 12 per cent of the remaining cards. You think that's not a helping hand?

False melds. Like fourflushers in poker, some petty gin cheats pass off runs like ♦6-♥7-♦8 as a meld. If properly arranged, such a false meld in all red or all black cards often goes unnoticed. If called on this point, the cheat can laugh it off as a mistake.

Hiding points. When a player knocks in gin, a sharper may attempt to hide a high-count card under a meld. The best protection on this count is to make sure that you always see ten cards.

Faulty counting. Some gin players habitually make "errors" in counting the points of their unmelded cards. Others make errors when they add up the score. Anyone playing gin for money should always check the opponent's addition. And see to it that the points on knock hands are entered in the proper column!

Finally, beware of gambling with strangers who happen to play gin rummy. Remember also that really good cardsharps are slick not only with the deck but also in hustling up a game. Some sharps who specialize in plucking rich people may even have one or more bird dogs who point or set up fat pigeons. Here's a newspaper account of such a hustle, which, as it turned out, had a happy ending:

At one of the swank beach spots last February, a couple registered and the wife became acquainted with the wife of a man who had made vast sums in war contracts. He was a gin rummy enthusiast.

The ladies went shopping and after they had become well acquainted, they introduced their respective husbands.

Strangely enough, it developed that the husband of the recently arrived couple was a gin rummy hound. They played, sometimes family games, other times just the two men. At first it was for small stakes—then for large stakes. But the obvious didn't happen.

Even at the higher stakes the war contractor kept winning until his new friend quit in disgust. His game, he admitted, just wasn't strong enough.

But the next day an acquaintance who played a much better game arrived. The consistent loser arranged a game between the newcomer and the big-business man and the latter kept winning.

He was being built up for the real kill. But it never came off. The hotel's detective staff had been watching the little drama all the time, and when the potential victim was just about to be taken, the house detective paid a visit to the members of the ring and they left quietly that evening.

And the tycoon kept the crooks' money!

10. Bridge

IN ONE SENSE, there is less professional cheating at bridge than at any other card game played for money. But make no mistake about bridge being a gambling game; one expert has estimated that about \$1 billion are wagered at bridge tables each year in the United States. Nor is all of it wagered at a penny a point; many rich people are avid bridge players, and John W. "Bet-a-Million" Gates reportedly would play for \$1,000 a point!

In spite of the money, most professional cardsharper's don't like the game or don't truck too well in it. It's too slow, and they don't have as many opportunities in a given length of time to do their dirty work as they have in blackjack or poker. All of the cards in the deck are dealt out in bridge, a fact that eliminates some of the gaffs and cheating techniques that were set forth in Part One; a holdout mechanism, for instance, would be useless gear in a bridge session, except possibly as an aid in ringing in a cold deck. Since the whole deck is in play, no one card has the importance that it has in blackjack or red dog.

For another thing, it is difficult to cheat the better bridge players consistently, simply because they recognize incongruous play, especially unsound bids that happen to pan out. Bridge is a game of skill in which the better players figure to win—and they know it. For another thing, few suckers can be enticed into a high-stakes bridge session, so that the sharper's victim will usually be a fairly good player.

Another problem for sharpers is that bridge is a social game that is usually played among friends of pretty much the same economic and professional status in life. In other words, it is usually more difficult for the run-of-the-mill cardsharper's to get into a bridge circle than into a blackjack game.

Although bridge is not the professional sharper's cup of tea, it is, in another sense, I venture to say, the world's most crooked card game. Bridge buffs may well raise their eyebrows—but better they do so at my words than at their partner's bid! If a player consistently reacts (or fails to react) in any way to reveal the nature of his hand to his partner, then he is, in a way, cheating. Called coffeehousing, this sort of thing was covered in *Bridge and Gin Gambitry*:

As a method of communication, coffeehousing uses the actor's "method"—among other things—plus a lot of vocal tricks. Sometimes coffeehousing is designed to mislead deliberately, at other times to make a point clear to one's partner. Proper use of coffeehousing gambitry can often confuse an opponent so badly that he thinks he's spending two weeks in a foreign town. In certain cases the tone of voice can be so insistent. . . well, one of the classics of all bridgedom had the noted wit George S. Kaufman insisting on a "review of the bidding, including all the inflections!"

Proper coffeehousing takes advantage of every available gimmick, including the aforementioned voice inflections, plus grimaces, grunts, pencils, pads . . . even deliberate lies.

After setting forth a few specific gambits, Stein added:

In bridge bidding, coffeehousing and conventions are like ham and eggs. Proper employment of such combinations not only signals the partner without upping the bidding, but often does it more accurately than straight use of conventions. Indeed, there are those who maintain that conventions without coffeehousing is as meaningless as television without a picture tube. An expert coffeehouser can sometimes indicate to his partner which suit he wants him to bid in without making a bid of his own!

Whether or not coffeehousing is outright cheating depends in large measure on the group. If everyone does it, then all the players have an equal opportunity of using their skill or talent for this sort of thing. If some do and some don't, then the coffeehousers have an unfair advantage over their more staid opponents.

I'm not going to attempt to draw the line here, but there is a difference between coffeehousing (which may be more or less accepted) and using prearranged signals to relay hard information between partners. As someone has said, two players can arrange a set of signals in five minutes. Here are some of the possibilities from Clement McQuaid's *Gambler's Digest*:

Two bridge cheats in the Chicago area have used a simple code similar to those used by so-called "mind-readers" to convey information.

A heart or whatever the suit happens to be means that it's a four-card suit. One heart means that it's a five-card suit. I'll bid a heart indicates a six-card suit, and I'll bid one heart indicates a seven-card suit.

When an mmm or uh immediately precedes the bid, it means, "I don't have the ace." If the mmm or uh is followed by a slight break before the bidder continues with his bid, it means, "I don't have the king."

On the partner's response, an mmm or uh preceding the bid, whatever it is, means that the partner has the ace or king the original bidder asked for. Two hearts means the barest minimum. I'll bid two hearts means better than the barest minimum but not enough points to change suits.

A flat bid by the responder in another suit means from nine to 12 points. I'll bid means more than twelve points. Pass means insufficient count without adequate trump support. I'll pass means insufficient count but adequate trump support.

When either partner bids four no-trump as a slam invitation, asking for aces, a response of five diamonds would indicate one ace and no kings. I'll bid five diamonds would indicate an ace and a king. An mmm or uh preceding the bid indicates two or more kings.

CHaSeD is their key word for suits. One card slightly up from the others or spread slightly at either end means, "Lead me a club." Two cards means, "Lead me a heart"; three means, "A spade, please"; and four means, "A diamond."

In 1965, the British bridge experts Terence Reese and Boris Schapiro were accused of giving signals during the World Bridge Championship meet at Buenos Aires. Reese wrote an interesting book about the accusation and the various trials and tribulations resulting from it. They were said to be using finger signals, but Reese maintained that such signals were quite crude and would have been easily detected. He said, at one point in his book, that it would be easy to cheat at bridge without being detected. As one example, he said that leaving a pencil at an angle after writing down the contract could convey information to a partner. In any event, anyone in doubt about the difficulty of proving, or disproving, the use of signals should read Reese's book, *Story of an Accusation*.

But, regardless of how difficult it may be to prove anything, it is fairly easy for the expert bridge player to sense that he is being cheated by signals. Here's an account from bridge master Ely Culbertson:

In London, I was once the victim of the smartest signals I have ever seen. They consisted of precise timing during bidding and play, based on the number of seconds of silence which elapsed before a bid or a play was made. The length of each period of silence indicated strength or weakness in a particular suit. Even here, however, a few rubbers sufficed to convince me that signals were being used, because I could hear the cheaters silently counting the seconds. After listening to one such silent count, I got up, continuing loudly, "eight, nine, etc. . . . that knocks me out, gentlemen. Good-by."

Remember that Culbertson was a true expert. I suspect that a good many ordinary players would have been taken by the London sharpers. Culbertson once published an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* in which he argued that cheating does not pay, that honesty is the best policy, etc. Some reader took him to task by letter, saying that he and his partner had been cheating at bridge for years and that it paid very well!

Although signals and coffeehousing are the more commonly used methods of cheating at bridge, some (but not all) of the gaffs and techniques set forth in Part One can be used to great advantage. Here are some specific techniques to watch for:

Stacking and stocking. There are a number of ways of stacking a deck, or part of it, for bridge by using either the riffle or the haymaker shuffle. The more common method, however, is to arrange a stack from tricks. Say the sharper wins a trick with the ♣A. When taking in the trick, he places it on top of the other three cards. Next, he wins a trick with the ♦K, which is also placed on top of the other three cards. And so on. When the cards are gathered for the shuffle, he places his stock on top of the deck. Then he false-shuffles, cuts the deck while crimping the top stack, and places the cards by his opponent. On the next deal, the cards are cut to the crimp, and the sharper receives the ♣A, ♦K, and whatever other good cards were included in the stack.

Mississippi heart hand. This dilly of bridge hand is pre-stacked and run in as a cold deck.

Note that the victim, in South position, seems to have a very good hand—a grand slam in hearts. But he can take only six tricks, whereas the dealer can take seven. (Incidentally, only the dealer's and the victim's hands need be stacked.)

North

♠ 5 4 3 2
♥ void
♦ 8 7 6 5
♣ 6 5 4 3 2

Dealer

♠ A K Q J 10 9
♥ 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
♦ void
♣ void

East

♠ 8 7 6
♥ void
♦ 10 9 4 3 2
♣ J 10 9 8 7

Victim

♠ void
♥ A K Q J 10 9
♦ A K Q J
♣ A K Q

The hand is usually run in toward the end of a bridge session when the stakes have been increased. I've read that the hand gets its name because the sharper suggests that they play Mississippi style, meaning that the value per trick can be doubled and redoubled any number of times. Thus, a game for small stakes can be ruinous, especially when the victim thinks he has a sure thing.

Actually, there are several variations of the Mississippi heart hand, and similar hands date back to the early days of whist. In fact, Edmond Hoyle published one called "The Duke of Cumberland's Hand" back in 1750!

Peeking. The front peek and the back peek are not often used in bridge because the sharper seldom has the opportunity to use them. Apparently it is possible to "flash" cards while the sharper deals (see Chapter 1), but few mechanics are good enough to do this in play. Most of the peeking done in bridge occurs after the cards have been dealt out. Deliberately the cheat drops a card or some object on the floor and blatantly looks at an opponent's hand when he picks it up.

Marked cards. Any sort of marked cards can be used to cheat in bridge. But watch especially for in-play markings, either by sandpapering or pegging or daubing—and pay particular attention to the spade suit.

One-way cards. About 90 percent of poker players and other gamblers use Bee or Bicycle cards, on which the backs are the same at the tops and bottoms. Bridge players, however, often use smaller cards with pictures on their backs, and sometimes these cards have a definite top and bottom. By turning all the cards the same way and then reversing key cards, a player can signal information to his partner.

It is also possible to use such cards as a form of "marking." By reversing all the aces, the slicker can tell who catches them—no matter who is dealing. Usually players who use the overhand shuffle will unknowingly keep the cards in order for

the sharpers, and even some players who use the riffle do not reverse the cards in either packet.

Whipsawing. In poker, the whipsaw shapes up when two players are in cahoots. In bridge, this sort of thing occurs when the victim's partner deliberately plays badly. In other words, the victim has three opponents instead of two!

A bridge cheating story with a twist (according to Frank Garcia, who says he heard the story from a newspaper reporter, who in turn got it directly from Charles Curtis, Vice-President under Herbert Hoover) involved a senator from Ohio. While on a train, he was steered into a bridge session by a prosperous-looking chap who pretended to be a fellow Ohioan. Although the senator was a good bridge player, his skill was no match for the sharpers, who kept bidding and making fives and sixes. He lost more than he could cover with ready cash, and, rather embarrassed, he asked his fellow Ohioan to cover a check for him. The slicker readily agreed, asking the senator to mail it, at his convenience, to a certain address in New York.

Back in Washington, the senator became a little suspicious of all those high bids. He consulted Charles Curtis, who was at that time United States senator from Kansas. Curtis advised him to have the Secret Service investigate the address before mailing the check. Sure enough, the address turned out to be a mail drop used by sharpers. The senator from Ohio tore up the check. His name? Warren G. Harding, who later became President of the United States!

11. High Card And High Spade

TOO OFTEN CARD GAMES requiring skill degenerate into an outright gamble in which two or more players cut high card for money. This practice would not merit even a brief chapter in a book about card games, but it must be emphasized in a book about cheating simply because of the volume of money that is won and lost at it.

Very few people sit down for a bout of cutting high card, but the practice is frequently used to settle various matters in a card game, such as who gets the extra chip in a split pot. Most of these incidents are of no serious consequence to the players, but cutting high card for money at the end of a card session has gotten a lot of gamblers into deep trouble—often into deeper trouble. This sort of thing usually starts off innocently enough as a one-cut proposition. But then the loser doesn't want to quit. Once I made the mistake of cutting high card with a guy for all of a split pot in high-low poker. I won, but he simply would not let it go at that. This incident almost ruined a good poker game.

Often the money involved in cutting high card becomes much higher than the stakes of the card game itself. This is especially true when the heavy losers are trying to "double up and catch up," a proposition that well suits the cardsharper.

Back in the riverboat days, Canada Bill Jones, the monte man, is said to have lost \$180,000 at cutting high card—on a single bet. That was a lot of money back then. More recently, Arnold Rothstein lost half a million dollars at either high card or high spade (accounts are not clear). The gamblers might have been wagering on the high card in a poker hand. In a 1972 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, Titantic Thompson, a big winner in the game, said, "Nate and I knew how to build the cards, putting the little ones on top of the big ones, you know, so they would run more or less how you wanted them to." This indicates to me that the cards were stacked and dealt out rather than being cut for high card. Anyhow, they were gambling at some

sort of high card and the game was gaffed. Rothstein welshed on the debt and was murdered for it.

Nicholas Andrea Dandolos, better known as Nick the Greek, once won \$100,000 from a wealthy lawyer in a poker game in a hotel at Hot Springs, Arkansas. He also won \$450,000 from side bets. When Nick got up to leave the game, the lawyer asked him whether he always quit when he got a little ahead. Nick stopped, turned, put \$550,000 on the table, and offered to cut high card for it before he left. The lawyer stared blankly at the money for some minutes. He said nothing. In the silence, Nick pocketed his winnings and left.

Nick would no doubt have cut for the money, and he would probably have been honest about it. But there are a number of gaffs that sharpers use in cutting high card:

Slick aces. I don't know exactly how the term "slicker" came to mean a clever swindler or a card cheat, but it could well have been from the practice of using "slick aces." All manner of preparations have been concocted for treating key cards, usually aces, so that they will be slicker than the rest of the deck. Such preparations are marketed by the magic and gaff supply houses, but almost any sort of floor wax will do the trick (although some waxes leave an odor). Carnauba wax is said to be very good, and I've read that pulverized soapstone works nicely.

When the faces of the aces are slicked, they will slide off the deck more readily than unslicked cards. Consequently, the sharper will sort of push the deck before he cuts. When the backs of the aces are slicked, the other cards will slide off them more readily, in which case the sharper will select the top card under a break in the deck. Often sharpers will spread the deck out on the table and the slick aces will cause almost a doorstep effect.

The same slick-ace effect can be achieved by making all the cards except the key cards a little rougher or more tacky than normal. According to *Sharps and Flats*,

The earliest method of preparing a pack of cards in this way certainly had the merit of extreme simplicity, in that it consisted of nothing more than putting the pack, for some time previous to its use, in a damp place. This system had the further advantage that it was not even necessary to open the wrapper in which the cards came from the maker. When the cards had absorbed a certain amount of moisture, it was found that the low cards would slip much more easily than the court cards. The reason for this was that the glaze used in "bringing up the colours" of the inks used in printing contained a large proportion of hygroscopic or gummy matter, which softened more or less upon becoming moist. The court cards, having a much greater part of their faces covered with the glaze than the others, were more inclined to cling to the next card, in consequence. Therefore the task of distinguishing them was by no means severe.

I haven't tried it, but the moisture technique probably won't work with playing cards made with modern inks and finishes, sealed in modern packaging materials, and used in air-conditioned gaming rooms.

But there are a number of roughing fluids and concoctions available. As a comment on how far a cardsharper will go with this sort of thing, here's a "secret" preparation from Eddie McGuire's booklet *The Phantom of the Card Table*:

In order to make up the formula, here is what you have to do. Fill a bottle three-quarters full with pure alcohol. Be sure that the alcohol is pure. Do not use denatured alcohol. Now, put two ounces of ether into the alcohol. The idea is that the ether is to make the alcohol dry faster, which stops the cards from curling. Alcohol alone will cause cards to curl.

Next, go to a first class music store and get a piece of the finest grade violin resin. Break this up into a powder form and put about an ounce of it in the bottle containing the alcohol and ether, thus dissolving the resin. Of course, you understand you have to shake the bottle to give the resin a chance to dissolve.

You now have a yellow fluid. NOW FOR THE SECRET OF THE FORMULA . .

Get a bottle of peroxide. Put about two ounces of the peroxide in the bottle. Shake it well, then let it stand overnight. You will notice that you now have a white liquid which is ready to put on the cards. In other words, the peroxide is used to bleach the yellow liquid, which means that there will be no yellow stains on the cards. Do not use any sediment that might be at the bottom of the bottle. If the liquid is not bleached out enough, you will have to use more peroxide.

After you make up a deck of cards by using the above formula, if they work too strong, or in other words, if the cards are too tacky, of course reduce the fluid with alcohol and ether. Now, if the cards are not working strong enough, of course you add more resin.

The formula above is said to have originated with an almost legendary cardsharp named Walter I. Scott. Apparently he was also an amateur chemist! The formula, together with other secrets, was first included in a manuscript by Eddie McGuire, copies of which sold for as much as \$50.

Strippers. Recently I purchased from a supply house a deck of high-low cards touted to be "something entirely new." The high cards are trimmed concavely, the low cards convexly. This means that an honest player who cuts in the normal manner (from the center) will be likely to cut off a low card. The slicker takes hold of the deck on one end and is likely to cut off a high card. Frankly, I don't think I could have been taken to the cleaners with this deck even before I heard about strippers, but it might have fooled me for the first few cuts. Another high-card stripper trick is to trim the ends of the cards instead of the long sides.

Crimps. One of the safest methods for the high-card sharp is to use an ordinary crimp, as was discussed in Chapter 4. Note also that the sharper might crimp a low card for his opponent to cut off.

Countdown. In his autobiography, John Scarne gave a long and interesting account of how he fooled Arnold Rothstein and six other gamblers (including two mechanics) by cutting off aces with their deck. Scarne, then a young man, had been hired to put on a private magic performance for a \$200 fee. The ace-cutting bit was the last part of the act. The gamblers couldn't tell how Scarne was hitting the aces, so they hired him again, telling him to skip the first part of the act and get to the ace-cutting feat. This went on for six nights in a row! Finally, Scarne told them that he counted down to the aces while he riffled the pack. If an ace fell on the eighteenth card from the top, Scarne would simply cut off eighteen cards. Well . . . that isn't easy to do! There probably isn't another man who can hit an ace by this

method with any degree of regularity, but I played around with the technique long enough to see that cutting for an ace need not be left entirely up to chance.

"High spade" is a term that designates a method of extrinsic betting on a poker deal. Two or more players put up their wagers in a side pot, which is won by the participant who catches the highest spade. Unless the spade fills a flush, it has no bearing on the poker hand. High card is played in a similar manner, and neither high card nor high spade is limited to poker games.

The trouble with this sort of thing is that the bets often shoot up beyond all proportion to the limits of the card game itself. Consequently, some sharpers will encourage such bets in low-limit play, just to stir up some action. The sharper can control who gets the high card or high spade by dealing seconds if he has marked cards or is a peek artist. If he's a cellar man, he can usually work a high card or a high spade to the bottom during his shuffle. Also, it's fairly easy for a holdout and palm artist to work at high card and high spade. And don't rule out a stacked deck.

The best protection, and the best policy, is simply not to gamble on high card or high spade in any way. At best, the honest gambler has only a 50-50 chance. At worst, he'll be up against a cardsharp.

12. Other Card Games

IT IS POSSIBLE TO CHEAT at any card game, from as nas to zioncheck, from auction schafkopf to ziginette. But there must be a thousand card games, and I have to draw the line somewhere. I therefore omit such games as That's It and old maid because I doubt that much money is wagered at them.

It is not my purpose in this chapter to explain the rules of play for all the games that follow. I assume that anyone who has a pressing need to know about cheating at klabberjass, for example, will already have been introduced to the game.

If one's game is poker or bridge or blackjack, and he never gambles at red dog or other games, then he will not miss much applicable information by skipping this chapter. But for those who do gamble at miscellaneous card games, I have arranged the entries that follow in alphabetical order for ease of reference.

Ace-deuce-jack. In this game, the deck is divided into three packets and the players bet that the bottom three cards will not contain an ace, a deuce, or a jack. As far as cheating techniques go, the game is very similar to cutting high card. It is, therefore, a natural for strippers, slick-ace cards, and crimps.

All fours. Also called old sledge, seven-up, and high-low jack, this is an old game that was, before poker, a favorite among American gamblers (most of whom called it seven-up). Here's a report on cheating in the game from *Foster's Complete Hoyle*:

Few games lend themselves more readily to the operations of the greek than seven-up. Turning jacks from the bottom of the pack; setting up the half-stock for the beg; dealing oneself more than six cards, and dropping on the tricks already won those counting for game; getting the A, J, 10, and 2 of a suit together during the play of a hand, and then shifting the cut to get them on the next deal, turning up the jack; marked cards; strippers, wedges; reflectors: these and many other tricks

are in common use. Those who are not expert enough to deal seconds or shift cuts will sometimes resort to such trifling advantages as abstracting one of the tens from the pack, so that they may know a suit from which a small card can always be led without any danger of the adversary's making the ten. One very common swindle in seven-up is known as the high hand, which consists in giving the intended victim the A-K-J-10-9-2 of trumps, and then inducing him to bet that he will make four points. No matter how skilful the player may be, he will find it impossible to save both jack and game.

Baccarat. This game is usually played only in casinos and is therefore covered in Chapter 14.

Between the sheets. This one is similar to red dog (covered later), and the cheating techniques are pretty much the same. In fact, cheating is a little easier in this game because the use of marked cards does not require that the deck be marked for suits as in red dog.

Canasta. The March 1969 issue of *McCall's* magazine carried an amusing article, "How the Nicest Women Cheat at Canasta," by Charles Goren. After discussing coffeehousing and other borderline cheating methods, Goren concedes that marked cards, slick dealing, and other professional tricks can be used to cheat at canasta; but he concludes that most of the deliberate cheating is done by prearranged signals.

Casino. As in any two-handed game, cheating at casino is fairly easy. Marked cards and slick dealing, as well as stacking or stocking during the count, will win for the sharper. I would say that most of the cheating at casino involves the ♦10, either marked for seconds or included in a set of belly strippers.

Chemin de fer. A house game.

Clab. Another name for klabberjass, which see.

Clob. Another name for klabberjass, which see.

Concentration. This one is usually played by kids for fun, but according to John Strauss, as quoted in *Gamblers Digest*, "I've seen professional gamblers play concentration by the hour. They regard it as an exercise and conditioner, and they don't play for small stakes. Watch real pros play this simple game and you'll get some idea of why they win at poker and gin." Well, if I did any serious gambling at concentration, I'd certainly consider another idea: marked cards.

Conquian. Often called coon can, this is another one of those two-handed gambling affairs. But it is a little safer than most head-to-head games. Generally, signals from someone outside the game are not as devastating as in gin rummy because intermediate point counts (used in games like gin and knock poker as an aid in knowing whether or not to knock or go down) are of no immediate value to the cheat. Also, how one discards is not as important as in gin. Marked cards and

shiners are not as effective in conquian as in most other card games simply because one must play his own hand without so much regard for what his opponent holds.

There are different rules of play, and these have a bearing on the applicable cheating techniques. Scarne on Cards says that any card that is picked up from the discard pile must be melded immediately, and this means that the top-stock peek is almost useless; on the other hand, *The New Complete Hoyle* says that a card may be picked up from the stock on speculation, in which case a top-stock peek would give one a valuable option in many cases. Scarne says that the cards are dealt one at a time, which would leave the game wide open to mechanics who can deal seconds or bottoms; *Hoyle* says that the cards are dealt two at a time, which would rather foil seconds and bottoms.

Anyhow, top or bottom stocks are easily run up while counting points in conquian.

Coon can. See "Conquian."

Cribbage. From *Foster's Complete Hoyle*:

The greatest advantage in cribbage is to secure good starters, and for this purpose the greek adopts various methods of trimming and marking the cards so that he may secure a starter exactly suited to his hand. . . . Any person who fingers the pack longer than necessary in cutting starters, or who cuts sometimes by the edge and sometimes by the side, will bear watching. Marked cards and second dealing are great weapons in a game where so much depends on a knowledge of the adversary's hand, and on securing good counting cards for yourself.

Ecarte. See "Euchre."

Euchre. A whole family of games evolved from triomphe, and three of them once achieved almost the status of "national games": Napoleon in England, euchre in America, and ecarte in France. I'm not too familiar with euchre and its cousins, so I would like to quote once again from *Foster's Complete Hoyle*:

All the euchre family of games, especially ecarte and Napoleon, offer numerous opportunities to the greek. So well is this known in Europe that it is considered extremely foolish for any person to play ecarte in mixed companies. The small number of cards in the pack, and the custom of dealing two and three at a time, gives the dealer an opportunity to bunch four valuable cards, of which he can give himself three, and turn up the fourth. False shuffles, shifted cuts, and marked cards are formidable weapons. The telegraph between partners, and the variation in tone or words in passing are frequently used by cardsharps. One of the commonest devices in America is the use of what are known as "jack strippers." These are two jacks, usually both of the same color, which can be withdrawn from any portion of the pack by the fingers of an expert, and placed on the top. When the sharp deals, he places cards enough on these to supply the other players on the first round, so that the strippers will come to him. When only two are playing, he strips them out and leaves them on the top when he cuts the cards, so that they shall be dealt to him. Never play euchre or ecarte with a man who cuts the pack with both hands.

Any person who is tempted to bet on any game in the euchre family should remember the advice of the worldly-wise Parisian to his son: "Until you have four eyes in your head, risk not your gold at ecarte."

Farmer. This game is similar to blackjack, and most of the cheating techniques set forth in Chapter 8 apply if the hands and hits are served as usual. According to one of the fatter Hoyle books, however, all hits should be served from the bottom of the deck. Well, this is a nuisance to the dealer but it puts some new wrinkles in cheating techniques. Marked cards and top peeks and seconds become less useful. The bottom peek becomes more potent, especially if the dealer has mastered greek seconds, a seldom used cheating technique in which the dealer serves the second card from the bottom!

Faro. See Roulette And Other Casino Games.

Find the queen. Another name for three-card monte. See Chapter 19.

Hearts. Generally, hearts is a relatively difficult game for sharpers, but stacking and stocking and related sleights can be used to cheat. And so can seconds or bottoms together with marked cards. Also watch for collusion—sometimes it's three on one.

High-card pool. See "Red dog."

High-low jack. See "All fours."

Kalaber. See "Klabberjass."

Klabberjass. Before gin rummy, this game was possibly the most popular gambling game for two. It is an easy game for sharpers. Although the practice of dealing off three cards at a time makes it easier to control stocks, it does pretty much rule out seconds and bottoms (unless the dealer serves each card individually). Watch especially for belly strippers and the top stock. Note that a top-stock meld is much more important in klabberjass than in most similar games, and a meld stock for the upcoming deal is quite easy to arrange while the cheat counts his points from the previous hand.

Klob. See "Klabberjass."

Knock poker. This excellent game is often played by two or more players while waiting for the dealer's-choice session to get under way, or by the two heavy losers long after the winners have gone to bed. Unfortunately, it's a very easy game for cardsharpers. Watch especially for signals from someone outside the game (as in gin rummy) and for stocking and stacking. In two-handed knock, watch for strippers.

Knock rummy. Cheating at this game is very similar to knock poker. One big advantage of knock rummy for the sharper is that it's very fast, more so than gin,

thereby giving him more opportunities in a given time period to practice his wiles. See also "Tonk," a form of knock rummy.

Macao. This game is similar to blackjack, and the cheating methods (Chapter 8) are pretty much the same. Watch especially for seconds, together with marked cards or peeking.

Monte bank. If the dealer holds the deck face up in this game (after the top and bottom layouts have been dealt), marked cards and seconds, as well as bottoms and peeking, are useless. But watch for stacking and related sleights. Watch also for strippers.

Napoleon. See "Euchre."

Old sledge. See "All fours."

Panguingue. Similar to conquian, pan is popular in the southwest United States and on the Pacific Coast. It is dealt in some Nevada casinos as well as in clubs. In casino or club sessions, the players are against each other (as in poker) rather than against the house dealer (as in blackjack). This means that the house has no reason to cheat, unless the dealer is in cahoots with a player or the house has a shill in the game. Although stacked decks, holding-out techniques, and other tricks can be used to cheat, in general pan is one of the hardest of all the rummy games for the cardsharpener. As stated earlier in this chapter, conquian is a difficult two-handed game for sharpers as compared to gin rummy or pinochle, and panguingue is even more difficult because up to fifteen people can play.

Pinochle. Stacking, double dealing, marked cards, and other cheating methods described in Part One can be applied to pinochle. In two-handed pinochle, watch especially for belly strippers—four aces in different suits. The sharper can use strippers to set up a bottom stock on his deal. Also, when he cuts for his opponent's deal he can strip out four aces and put them on top; he will receive three aces to his opponent's one, and he'll get all four if he can persuade the sucker to deal four cards at a time instead of three. (The process of dealing three or four cards at a time, however, cramps the second and bottom dealer's style, unless he serves the cards one by one.) Watch for the stock peek and for cards marked heavily enough to be read off the stock; whenever the sharper knows that a good card is on top, he can make more effort to win the trick.

In partnership pinochle, watch for signals. In man-for-man pinochle with more than two players, watch for collusion.

Pitch. Often called setback, this game has a number of varieties. All of them evolved from all fours (see above), a very popular gambling game in the nineteenth century.

Put and take. Also called up and down the river, this game, a cousin to red dog, is a natural for the sharper who has even a modest ability to stock or stack the deck. Marked cards, however, are not as important as in red dog (except as an aid to dealing seconds and bottoms) because the size of a player's "puts and takes" are

not as arbitrary as the bets on each turn in red dog. (By the way, this game is also akin to the put-and-take game that used to be played with spinning tops, which has all but disappeared—probably because of the widespread use of loaded tops!)

Red dog. Also called high-card pool, this is a gambling game in which almost everything depends on the top card of the deck. Consequently, marked cards are a natural in the game, except that the deck will have to be marked for both rank and suit. If the dealer holds the deck in his hand, watch for seconds. If he deals the up cards while the deck is on the table, watch for the stock peek. Whenever the pot gets really big, as it sometimes will, BEWARE THE COLD DECK. In fact, a cold deck can be stacked to build a pot and clean out a sucker before a single shuffle is required. A five-dollar ante can quickly build a pot of thousands of dollars.

Rouge et noir. See "Trente-et-quarante" (Chapter 14)

Rummy. There are dozens of kinds of rummy, and virtually all the cheating methods set forth in Part One can be applied to one kind or another. (Actually, many of the games listed in this chapter are forms of rummy, such as panguingue and conquian.) In most rummy games, watch especially for the pickup stack, during which a meld will be arranged. Also watch for the stock peek. See the discussion of cheating at gin rummy in Chapter 9.

Setback. See "Pitch."

Seven and one half. The principle of this game is similar to blackjack, so the same cheating techniques are applicable (discussed in Chapter 8). Watch especially for the second dealer, using either marked cards or peeking methods.

Seven and twenty-seven. This game, together with two and twenty-two, is often played at dealer's-choice poker sessions. (But it's really not poker, in spite of the element of the bluff.) Stacked cards, cold decks, and so on can be used in this game, but, hand in and hand out, marked cards would have to be the real money getter in this game, especially in the hands of a good number-two man. Watch also for the various top-card peeks.

Seven-up. See "All fours."

Skin. John Scarne has said that in his opinion skin is the fastest gambling game played with cards. That in itself is an advantage for sharpers, but it also happens to be easy to cheat at skin. Knowing the value of the top card makes one a sure winner, so that this game is a natural for marked cards.

Slogger. See "Baccarat" (Chapter 14)

Three-card monte. This one is usually more of a con game than anything else. See Chapter 19.

Tonk (or tunk). The cheating techniques used in tonk are, by and large, like those used in gin and similar rummy games. The similarity to gin is especially close in two-handed tonk. The stock peek, however, loses in significance because in tonk a player must meld the discard if he picks it up, and therefore does not often have a choice of taking the discard or drawing from the stock. While the peek loses importance, the ability to run up a three-card meld is much more deadly than in gin. The double deal and holdout can be worked in tonk, as was indicated by the letter in Chapter 5.

In addition to the cheating techniques used in gin, watch for collusion when more than two players are sitting in on a tonk session. One common practice is for a cheat to feed usable discards to an accomplice on his immediate left. Such collusion requires a fairly elaborate set of signals. Much simpler signals are often used when a kibitzer or spy indicates to a player the approximate point count the opponents have in their hands.

Trente-et-quarante. See Chapter 14.

Tunk. See "Tonk."

Two and twenty-two. This game is played almost exactly like seven and twenty-seven (see above). The only difference, from the sharper's viewpoint, is that a swing hand is easier to stack or otherwise obtain. In two and twenty-two, A-A would be a perfect high and a perfect low. This means that the stack can be made so that the dealer catches A-A on the first two cards, before any hits can upset the run of the deck. In seven and twenty-seven, on the other hand, the sharper would have to stack at least three cards, A-A-5, to set up a swing hand, and the stack would probably be upset by hits around the table, unless the sharper could deal seconds or bottoms.

Up and down the river. See "Put and take."

Ziginette. According to John Scarne, ziginette is the biggest "money card game in Italy." I've never gambled on the game, but a half hour practice session with chips convinced me that it is very fast. Facility at stacking a deck, together with the ability to false-shuffle and nullify a cut, would serve the sharper well in this game when he holds the deal. A carefully arranged cold deck would be devastating. High-low strippers, trimmed so that three cards of each rank can be stripped out and placed on the bottom of the deck during the cut, are hard to beat in this game.

So ... whenever you find yourself losing your money in any card session and grow impatient to catch up, by all means shout the customary, "Shut up and deal, goddammit." But first see that the cards are properly cut.

13. Craps

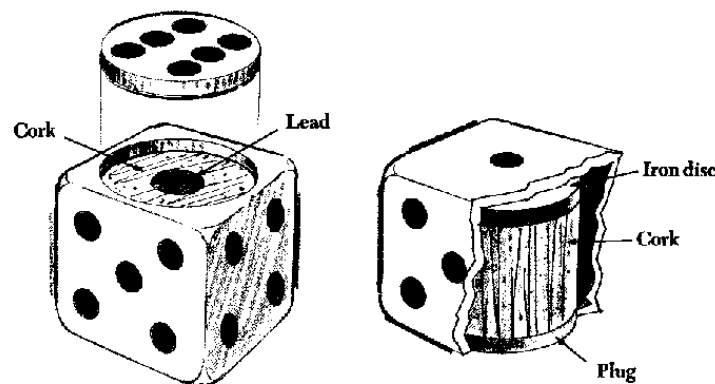
LOADED DICE HAVE BEEN FOUND in Egyptian tombs. Other gaffed dice have been found in some of the most ancient excavations. The Vedic hymns, composed in India around 1500 B.C., make it clear that playing at dice was a favorite pastime, and references were made to loaded dice, gaffed dice cups, and sleights of hand being practiced by the shooters. Loaded dice were used in a titanic gambling match for the

possession of a kingdom, including 1,500 slave girls adorned from head to foot. Dicing was popular in the Persian court of Cyrus the Younger, and Roman emperor Claudius, who would gamble the equivalent of \$50,000 a throw, wrote a book on how to win at dice. By 1545 cheating at dice had become so widespread that Roger Ascham, tutor to Queen Elizabeth and professor of Greek at Cambridge, published a catalog of loaded and gaffed dice.

So, crooked dice have been around for a long time, and a detailed history would reveal not only human ingenuity on the one hand and human gullibility on the other but also man's technological progress.

In the past, mercury was a favorite material for loading dice because of its weight. But dice loaded with mercury tended to knock or rattle perceptibly, and in time the mercury would work through the pores of the dice and blacken the sides.

Although seldom used today, the old mercury-loaded tappers were the most versatile of all loaded dice. These are hollow cubes with a central cavity that is joined by narrow channels to similar cavities in the sides of the die. Tappers are loaded with just enough mercury to fill one cavity. In neutral position, the mercury is in the center cavity. When the shooter wants to "load" one side, he points it down and taps the die on top, which causes the mercury to drop down into the lower cavity. Turning the loaded side up and tapping the die again shifts the load back to the center. Thus, the same dice can be loaded one way for coming out in a craps game and another way for making a point.



An old method of loading dice. The lead and iron are heavier than the die material (celluloid), but the cork is lighter, so that the loaded die is no heavier than an ungaffed one of similar size.

One big drawback is that the tapping motion itself became a well-known tip-off. Another problem is that the tapper principle will not work very well with modern transparent materials. Even so, a few tappers are still around.

Another clever kind of "loaded" dice were also hollow, but they contained no mercury or anything else except air. Instead of weighting down one side, the opposite side was made lighter! These dice were called floaters because the early ones would float when given the water test (discussed later). Warning: Some of the modern percentage floaters may not be buoyant.

When transparent dice became popular, many gamblers believed that they could not be loaded. They were wrong. Most of the loaded transparent dice are, however, relatively weak as compared to the old "first flop" mercury loads. Most modern loads won't guarantee that the shooter will roll, or won't roll, certain combinations, but they will shift the percentage to favor or disfavor certain combinations.

To gaff transparent dice, some of the number spots are drilled slightly deeper than necessary. The holes are partly filled with thin slugs, often of gold, platinum, or tungsten. The top of the slug is then painted or finished to match the unloaded spots. To avoid visual detection through the transparent material, the better work has all the

spots drilled to the same depth. The unloaded spots are filled up with paint that is lighter than the slug material. In fact, it is possible to get a light percentage load by using metallic paint at some spots and regular paint at the others.

Some of the transparent dice manufactured today do not have countersunk spots. Instead, the spots are flush with the surface. These dice are difficult to load, but they can be gaffed in other ways. Also, a load made of heavier transparent material can be used with either green or red transparent dice.

Another ingenious method of loading and controlling dice is to use steel or iron loads in connection with magnets under the field of play. The loads vary from slugs (Figure 79) to discs cut from a wire grid to metallic paint used on the key spots. Electromagnets are used because they can be activated by a switch whenever desirable. Most such magnets are attached under the dice table and are powered by dry-cell batteries; larger magnets are powered from automobile-type batteries or from converted house current.

Back in 1894, John Nevil Maskelyne said that "electric dice" were the most modern development in gaffing dice. Later he said, "The publication of this book, however, will once and for all render the use of electric dice unsafe under any conditions. The moment the outer world has any idea of their existence, the game is too risky to be pleasant to any sharp." Maskelyne either overestimated the power of his prose or underestimated the dice sharp's gall. Juice joints, as they are called, are still around. And in a big way. According to a report from the FBI, two electromagnets—each



Figure 79

weighing approximately one ton—were discovered embedded in the concrete floor of a gambling joint in Biloxi, Mississippi!

Also, FBI agents have raided craps sessions and found several sharps, and even kibitzers, wearing magnetic belts to control the roll of the dice! Dice gaffed for use with such belts have the loads on the sides, not on the bottoms.

Most of the fast work (as compared to slower percentage cheating) done at craps today is not by loaded dice (which are usually percentage dice these days) but by misspotted dice called tops-and-bottoms. They are also known as horses, tees, tops, busters, and misspots. During the old days of hazard they were called dispatchers, and apparently they have been around for some time; Roman artifacts found in Britain include a misspotted die with two sixes.

Such dice usually show the same number on the top and bottom, as shown by a mirror in Figure 80. Most misspots have only three numbers on each die, but this

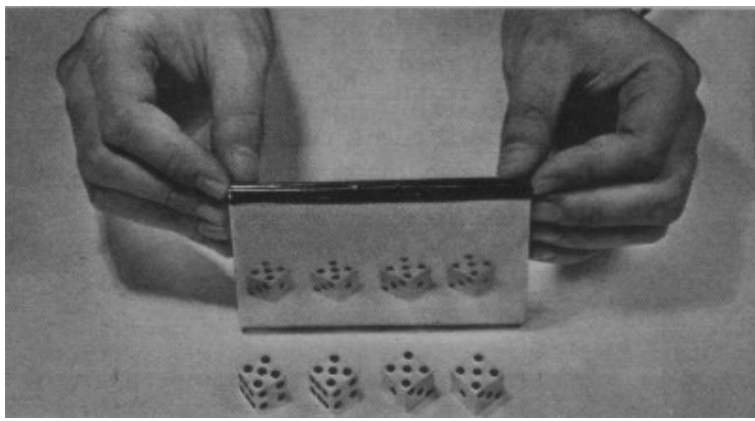


Figure 80

seemingly blatant gaff really isn't very obvious because only three numbers are in view at one time on an honest die.

Consider the possibilities. Each die contains the numbers, two, four, and six. These can roll 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12—but never a 7. They are therefore highly desirable cubes when a sharper is looking for one of these points. With the numbers two, three, and six, the points 9 and 5 as well as 4, 6, and 8 can be rolled—but never a 7. The latter combination is popular because any point except a 10 can be made. Some cheaters, however, prefer a combination like three, four, five on one die and one, five, six on the other, with which it is possible to roll a 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, or 11—but never a 7.

Consider another set of tops. One die contains one, three, five; the other, two, four, six. Only odd numbers can be made, so that the shooter must seven out before he can make a point of 4, 6, 8, or 10. With still another set—one, four, five on one die and two, three, six on the other—the points 5 and 9 become impossible, so that the shooter must seven out before making either point.

If tops were left in play very long, they would of course be detected. In private games a dice mechanic can easily palm and switch dice on his roll, or at any time he gets his hands on the honest dice. In casinos and house games, the stickman can introduce the tops. In casinos that use them, dice mechanics who specialize in ringing in false dice are called bustout men.

Most accomplished bustout men and switchmen use the palm switch. In Figure 81, the sharper holds the gaffed dice in his palm while he picks up the honest dice in his fingers. (For purposes of illustration, different-colored dice are used in the photos.) As he closes his hand, the crooked dice drop down and the honest dice are palmed in their place. Then he rolls the crooked dice while palming the honest ones, as shown in Figure 82. The two-handed switch is a lot easier than the palm switch. The sharper has a pair of gaffed dice in his right hand. He picks up the honest dice in his left hand and pretends to transfer them to his right, but of course he retains them in his left hand and quickly rolls out the gaffed dice.

I once observed an amusing skull-craps game in Huntsville, Alabama. Certain shooters threw the dice so hard that they often bounced off the table and onto the floor. The shooter grabbed them with his left hand and came up shooting with his right! The same trick is used in many other dice sessions, and often a confederate will switch dice for the shooter. In some large craps games, only a floorman is allowed to pick up dropped dice!



Figure 81



Figure 82

Not all misspotted dice are sure-fire missouts or passers. Some are percentage dice. Several combinations can be used, as, for example, two deuces on a top-and-bottom die that is used together with an honest die. Thus, the number five is eliminated on one die and the number two appears twice. This means that the points four and five are easier to make and that the points nine and ten are harder to make. The percentage man bets accordingly.

Percentage dice are usually left in action for long periods of play, whereas bustout tops and first-flop loaded dice must be switched in and out frequently.

Other percentage dice include:

Flats. Dice that have been abraded or shaved down (usually from ten to fifty thousandths of an inch) on one or more sides are called flats. The shaved sides will have more surface area than the other sides, and, consequently, the dice are more likely to come to rest on these sides. Several combinations are possible, but the most popular are called six-ace flats. This means that the sixes and aces will turn up more frequently than the other numbers.

Using six-ace flats, the shooter is at a disadvantage. On the come-out, he'll make more passes (six-ace or ace-six) but he'll also roll more craps (ace-ace or six-six) so that the one cancels out the other. The big percentage against the shooter comes into play whenever he is looking for a point, in which case there is a more than normal chance that he'll seven out.

Six-ace flats are called missouts because the shooter is at a disadvantage. Passers, on the other hand, favor the shooter. Such a passer combination would be six-ace on one die and three-four on the other. This combination would alter the normal odds of making the points 9, 10, 4, and 5.

The exact odds applicable when using flats would depend on how heavily the dice have been trimmed down. The stronger the work, the more the cheat's advantage—but the greater his risk of being caught.

An old Navy buddy of mine told me that a set of dice can be biased enough to give one a percentage edge merely by putting them into a vice equipped with copper soft

jaws and squeezing them a bit. I haven't experimented with this, but he may be right. Recently I read of this gaff in *Book on Games of Chance*, which was published around 1520!

Bevels. Dice that have one or more sides slightly rounded, or convex, are called bevels. These dice tend to roll off the rounded sides and come to rest on the flat sides. Various combinations can be made, either for missouts or passers. Also, it's possible to have combination flats and bevels!

Suction dice. Dice having one or more sides slightly concave, or hollowed out, will tend to come to rest on those sides because of a suction effect. Dice with the six-ace sides slightly concave, for example, would have the same effect as the six-ace flats. Also, it's possible to combine suction dice with bevels.

Edge-work dice. Dice with cut edges usually have an angle of 45 degrees. If this angle is changed, one side of the die will be longer than the other. This means that a die cut at any angle other than 45 degrees would have more surface area on some sides.

Other edge work includes dice with jutting edges, which gives more surface area on certain sides. The result obtained with edgework is pretty much the same as with flats.

Painted dice. If one or more sides of a die are painted with a tacky solution, they will tend to slow down and come to rest on these sides. In his book *Radner on Dice*, Sidney H. Radner reported that collodion (a solution used as a coating for photographic film) can be used to "paint" dice; it has to be warmed before it will become tacky, and the necessary heat is generated by friction when the shooter rubs the dice vigorously in his hands before rolling. (In the past, I've seen several shooters do this, and I wonder now whether they were literally warming up the dice!) Such dice can, of course, be fixed as either missouts or passers; in either case, they'll pick up dirt and therefore have to be played on a very clean surface.

Rough dice. If a side of a die is roughed by sandpaper or by other means, the die tends to tumble off that side and come to rest by sliding on a slicker side.

Burr dice. These dice are gaffed by leaving little burrs around the spot holes when they are drilled during manufacture. The idea is that the burrs will catch on the gaming surface and tend to tumble the dice over. Obviously, burr dice work best on a cloth or similar surface.

Slick dice. In contrast to rough dice and burr dice, these are polished on certain sides. They tend to slide to rest on the slick sides.

Caps. These dice are coated with a resilient material that makes them tend to bounce off certain sides. Usually, the entire surface of the sides to be capped is treated, but it's possible to cap only the edges.

Honey dice. One or more sides of these dice are coated with a sticky material. But honey dice are good for only a few rolls before the substance wears off.

Pig's bristle dice. At one time, dice were gaffed by sticking a short pig's bristle into one corner of a die, thereby causing the die to trip over.

Drugstore dice. Large casinos use dice that are perfect to within 1/10,000 of an inch. Cheaper dice are often "off" enough to give a sharper an appreciable percentage edge.

When dealing with inexperienced gamblers and no "regulation" dice table—conditions that are often fulfilled during time of war—the sharper need not have gaffed dice. He can more or less control his throws. We had such a slicker aboard our ship during the Korean conflict. He did quite well, until a big Southern boy said, "I expect you'd better get a fruit jar to shake those bones in!"

There are several variations on controlled throws, and the terminology is confusing. More than one throw, for example, is called a greek roll. Anyhow, here are some of the more common ways of controlling honest dice:

Blanket roll. On the come-out, the dice are placed side by side with an ace or a six on one die touching an ace or a six on the other. (Arranging the dice in this manner is called facing off.) Then the dice are rolled end over end, like wheels, so that an ace or a six never comes up. If successful, the blanket roll eliminates the possibility of craps, increases the possibility of seven, and decreases the probability of getting a hard point of either four or ten. Also, by facing off the proper numbers the blanket roll can be used when the shooter is looking for a point.

To make the blanket roll, the sharper will usually hold the dice in the bend of his middle fingers or will hold them together between the thumb and forefinger. The latter method is seldom used today. To detect the blanket roll, watch the dice as they gallop across the gaming surface to see whether they bounce erratically or roll end over end. Insist that the dice be rattled in the shooter's hand. (The skilled mechanic, however, can rattle the dice without turning them over by using the lock grip, as shown in Figure 83.) More important, insist that both dice bounce off some sort of backboard.

The blanket roll probably got its name during World War II, but it has been around since the days when hazard was the big gambling dice game.



Figure 83

Whip shot. This one is more difficult than the blanket roll. The sharper picks up and faces off so that the desired numbers are on top. With a whip-out motion, he releases the dice so that they spin across the gaming surface instead of rolling or bouncing. As the sharper lets go of the dice, he will quickly pull back his hand; he puts a spin on the dice with his two middle fingers. If the whip shot succeeds, the desired numbers are still on top when the dice come to rest.

In a more subtle variation, the sharper spins only one die, which still gives him a considerable advantage. If his point is 10, for example, he spins a die so that four, five, six is on top. This makes for an even bet that he will make the 10 before sevening out—so he takes the usual 2-to-1 odds.

Watch for the quick whip release, spinning dice (or die), and the initial pickup and facing off. Insist that both dice hit a backboard.

Ever see an elastic cord stretched across a dice table? It was there to trip the spinning dice, thereby foiling the whip-shot specialists.

The slide. In this shot, the sharper picks up and faces off so that the desired numbers are on top. Then he slides the dice across the gaming area. The ruse is easy to detect, but smart cheats won't slide both dice. Instead, they'll slide one and let the other one bounce. Even with the distraction of one galloping die, the slide shot is still fairly easy to spot.

The bounce shot. This one is very difficult, since the sharper must bounce the dice off a backboard. The dice are held one atop the other, and the bottom die has a desirable number up. The dice are thrown so that both hit the backboard and the flat (horizontal) surface at the same time. The bottom die is sort of pinned in, and, if the throw is perfect, will not turn over.

The bounce shot can be detected by carefully watching how the dice hit the gaming surface and backboard.

The dice-cup roll. In the days when hazard was the thing, several techniques were developed for controlling dice when using a dice cup or box. (Gaffed cups probably date back much earlier. Believe it or not, Aristotle, who was very much against gambling, proposed a method of controlling dice with a turret-shaped cup!)



Figure 84

Dice boxes with polished interior surfaces (called slick boxes) or those with a small diameter can be used to make a rattle without actually shaking the dice or turning them over. Also, a sharper can hold one die with his finger, inside the lip or outside the box, while shaking the other around; on the come-out, he controls the die he has

held. Called topping, this is fairly easy to do on a short "roll" or when the dice are merely dumped out of the box.

Dice cups aren't normally used in American craps, but if your game makes use of one, be sure that it has an inner lip around the mouth. Such a dice cup, called a trip box, will cause the dice to turn over as they come out.

Fortunately, most gaffed dice can be detected, and some of the tests are almost as old as the gaffs.

The water test, for example, is an old method of detecting loaded dice. If dropped into a pitcher or tall glass of water, the balanced die will sink without turning; a loaded die will turn, heavy side down, and will hit bottom with the desired numbers up. See Figure 84.

The pivot test is also an old method of detecting loaded dice. A die is held between the thumb and forefinger, as shown in Figure 85. With the forefinger of the other hand, the die is revolved slowly, stopping occasionally to see if the die rotates or settles heavy side down. If so, it's loaded. To be exhaustive, you should pivot the die from different corners.

The burn test and the saw test are also effective, if the situation allows the dice to be destroyed. The saw test reveals metal substances as well as the cavities in tappers and floaters. The burn test will leave a slug if the die was loaded heavily.

Dice loaded with transparent weights are more difficult to test. Neither the burn test nor the saw test will reveal anything. The pivot test may work, but try it several times. The water test may also work, but be sure that a tall glass or pitcher is used. According to Frank Garcia, their appearance may be a good tip-off; they come, he says, only in large sizes (9/16-inch and up) and have flush spots.

Dice loaded for use with electromagnets can be spotted with any sort of magnet, to which they will cling, as in Figure 86. Also, a compass can be used to detect the electromagnets. The compass needle will cut up when the juice is turned on, and it will point toward an activated electromagnet instead of toward the North Pole. But note that the compass will not react to an electromagnet until it is energized.

To detect bevels, place the suspected die against a square one and see if they will wobble. Try all sides. Also, hold the paired-up dice against a light and see if a hairline shows through. Suction dice can also be detected by the light test, and a knife-edge



Figure 85



Figure 86

square is useful in detecting both bevels and suction dice.

The only sure way to detect flats is to use a precision dial micrometer or a micrometer caliper. Heavy work can be detected visually by placing the suspected die against an honest one of the same "size."

Capped dice can be detected by scratching all sides with an instrument or a fingernail. It's easier to leave a mark on a capped side or edge. Also, capped sides will have a rather tacky feeling when rubbed against a regular die.

Edge work can be spotted by visual inspection of the angle, or by feeling for raised edges.

Misspotted dice can be detected by checking whether or not opposite sides add up to seven. In play, notice whether one die always shows the same three numbers. Percentage misspots, however, are more difficult to detect. The only sure way is to give all sides of both dice the seven test.

Some floaters can be detected by the water test. Some of them will be so hollow that they will float on water, and other will be "loaded" enough so that they will turn while sinking. Hollow dice will also make a different sound from solid dice if they are thrown on a hard surface.

As stated earlier, a compass will react to an electromagnet—but remember that the electromagnet will be energized only at critical points in the play.

Not long ago, a magazine reported what was touted to be one of the most fantastic cheating devices of all time. A steeplejack, it was said, discovered that dice having certain sides rubbed with cobalt-60, a radioactive material, could be controlled by a miniature pulsating device he had invented. The article said that the Nevada Gaming Commission had warned the casinos about the "theoretical possibilities" of the cobalt-60 thing, and added that such "possibilities" had, or were believed to have, cost the Dunes Hotel casino \$300,000 in one month alone.

I wrote the Nevada Gaming Commission for more information. They replied that their files contained no data on such an incident and that a number of people who had been in the gaming industry for a number of years had no recollection of the matter. After I jogged their memory a bit, they replied that the cobalt-60 cheating technique had been a hoax, played up big in the local newspapers.

Wondering why a number of people who had been in the gaming industry for a number of years had not immediately remembered such a noteworthy hoax, I wrote to the Atomic Energy Commission at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. They replied that it sounded fantastic all right—like something out of Isaac Asimov's science fiction.

The consensus of other scientists I checked with is that it probably was a hoax. So, when you pack the micrometer, bar magnet, compass, and water glass into your detective kit before heading for your next craps session, it is probably safe to leave the portable Geiger counter at home!

14. Roulette And Other Casino Games

CASINO GAMBLING was brought up in the chapter on blackjack and again in the chapter on craps. Although both games are indeed popular in licensed casinos and in illegal gambling establishments, they are also popular in private sessions. The same duality cannot be claimed for roulette and a few other games and gambles that are usually played within the context of some sort of "house" authority. Such games usually require expensive equipment and elaborate layouts.

Roulette or any other game played in a licensed casino is usually—but not always—honest, whereas roulette or any other game played in an illegal gambling house is often—but not always—downright crooked. The reasons for this will be discussed at length in Part Three. Meanwhile, here are some of the more popular casino games and ways in which they have been gaffed:

ROULETTE

Juiced wheels. If magnets are placed under the roulette table, or in it, the croupier can more or less control a ball that has a magnetized iron core. The more powerful the magnet, the more control he has of the ball. Actually, zeroing the ball requires a good deal of skill and practice; the wheel spins one way, the ball circles the other way, and the electromagnet is stationary in, or under, the table. The operator would have a better control if the magnet were placed in the wheel itself, but it's difficult to connect such a spinning magnet to an electrical source and an on-off switch.

Juiced roulette layouts can be purchased from disreputable gambling supply houses, or an honest wheel can be gaffed on the premises. This form of cheating is usually done by a crooked gambling joint, but it can also be used by players, or a mob, against the house. Sometimes a dishonest roulette assembly will be purchased innocently by the gambling establishment, and then all the cheat must do is somehow switch balls. In his book *Casino Administration*, Judah Binstock said that the cheat can also switch in a magnetic ball and put iron filings in certain slots in the wheel.

Another method is for the cheat or mob to install a "portable" magnet under one or more tables. This will usually be done in cahoots with a casino employee. Such a thing has been attempted even at Monte Carlo, where roulette has reigned for a long time. Once a beautiful Egyptian girl used her charms on a croupier, and he proposed to her. The girl accepted, but requested that he place small magnets under several roulette tables so that they could win a lot of money and get the marriage off to a good start. Recognizing that a cheating mob was behind the intrigue, he reported everything to the casino management, as a good croupier should. The casino rewarded him with 5,000 francs, but he lost the rather magnetic favors of the beautiful Egyptian girl.

The needle wheel. This ingenious method of gaffing roulette has been around for a long time. Just in front of each red and black slot there are fine needle holes. By pushing one button, the operator causes fine needle points to project in front of each red slot; by pushing another button, he causes the needles to project in front of the black slots. The needle points bring the ball to rest at either red or black, as the operator desires. The holes and the needle points are so tiny that they are very difficult to see at normal gaming distances. The needle principle is also used, and perhaps more frequently, to cause the ball to stop at either 0 or 00.

Bouncers. If a certain pocket on a roulette wheel is lined with hard rubber or thin sheets of cork, the ball will tend to bounce out. The same effect can be produced by a double layer of felt.

An opposite effect was reported by Allan Wilson in *The Casino Gamblers Guide*: At Harolds Club, a player had sneaked into the wheel room and was lining some

pockets with thin sheets of lead. Apparently the lead was to deaden the bounce of the ball so that it would be more likely to come to rest in the lined slots!

Widened slots. If the cheat has full cooperation with casino employees, it is possible to widen some slots. The ball would, of course, tend to settle in a widened slot, thereby giving the cheat an edge over the casino. The casino itself can increase its winnings by having the 0 and 00 wider than the other slots.

Controlling the spin. Some croupiers who spin roulette wheels every day are believed to be able to control, to a degree, where the ball will stop. But such a croupier has to be very skilled, and even so he could expect to hit one sector of the wheel only slightly more often than normal. If he can hit the sector just 5 percent of the time, however, it will give the house quite an extra advantage.

Nudging. In this ruse the "losing" player moves his bet into a winning position. A variation is called *la pousette* in French casinos. A lady will empty her purse onto the table, then use her elbow to push a comb or compact out to nudge the chip to a winning square! If caught, she can of course say that it was unintentional.

Pushing. To place a bet after the outcome of an event is known is called pushing. Here's a report from *Casino Administration*:

Roulette is the game where "pushing," or "shoving," as it is sometimes called, is practised most. And if the cheating player has the cooperation of the Chef de Partie and the dealers, then this can be catastrophic for the house. Even without such connivance, pushing can easily occur, though mainly on the columns (in American roulette).

A favorite method is for one player to sit at the end of the table and his accomplice near the wheel. As the ball falls into the slot, and before the croupier has had time to call the winning number, the associate near the wheel makes a hand signal, holding up his little finger, his first two fingers, or perhaps three fingers. According to the signal, his partner will quickly push a bet on to one of the three vertical columns. It may sound absurdly naive, but fortunes have been made by such simple means. Italians have proved particularly expert at this.

Sugaring the bet. One of the more common methods of cheating the wheel is to sugar the bet. When the cheat wins, he reaches out to count how many chips he has placed, but his real purpose is to deposit an additional chip atop his original bet. An alert croupier will of course spot the ruse, but in order to avoid a scene the plush casinos will sometimes let the cheat get away with it—once.

Incorrect payoffs. One of the more common ways in which the house cheats a player is to shortchange him on winning bets. This is also done in casino blackjack and other games, but it is more common in roulette on long shots, on which the winning players receive a large number of chips and, indeed, may not even know the correct payoff.

A player in cahoots with an employee can cheat the house by receiving a high payoff. For an example of how far this sort of thing can go, see the discussion on page 133 of the "hollow chip" cheating ring.

Copping. Some players and bystanders literally steal from big winners with piles of chips. See Chapter 6.

WHEELS OF FORTUNE

The big six, the money wheel, the racehorse wheel, and various other wheels of fortune are all similar. They are seldom gaffed in licensed casinos—they don't have to be simply because the house edge on such games is about 20 percent or higher. The wheels can, however, be gaffed by hidden mechanical brakes.

The best policy is never to play such games for appreciable stakes at carnivals and elsewhere. Here's a gaffed wheel ad from an old carnival-gear catalog:

The attention of all outside men, and of all who make it their business to work the fairs, races, bathing places, picnics, watering places, excursions, etc., is called to this wheel. It is invaluable, and is undoubtedly the cheapest and most attractive wheel made in this country for the money. It is a sure thing, and can be completely controlled by the dealer so as to defy detection, who can make it stop at any point desired. You can let the players spin it if they wish; it makes no difference, you can control it all the same. It is very simple, and anybody can work it to perfection with the instructions that are sent with each wheel. It is about two feet in size, and the whole weight does not exceed eight pounds. The whole apparatus can be carried with ease by one man; picked up in a second and moved to another place, and set down and started again without a minute's delay. I have no hesitation whatever in saying that any man with as much sense as a monkey, with one of these wheels at any fair or race track, or any place where a large crowd is assembled, must get a game, and to get a game is a sure thing to get the money.

CHEMIN DE FER, BACCARAT, AND PUNTO BANCO

These games, which are quite similar, are played in casinos with six or eight decks of cards. The cards are dealt from a shoe, which eliminates the possibility of a lot of the card mechanic's tricks. Also, modern multideck shoes are more difficult to gaff than the old faro dealing boxes.

In a casino, the main thing to watch for is a stacked sequence of cards being placed in the shoe. Here's a rundown from Casino Administration:

The substitution of a complete baccarat shoe of six decks is, of course, extremely difficult. But it is possible. Remember that, as the cards are mixed by the croupier between shoes, only one or two players stand by the table. When the time comes for the switching of the decks, before the banquier has shuffled, the attention of these players is drawn away by a valet or the croupier. The new decks are then substituted by the banquier. He brings the cold decks out of a special pocket, usually cut inside his jacket, and the ordinary cards, previously used, are quickly slipped off the table, either into this hidden pocket or into a hairnet planted between his legs. The cards are left there until the game has finished and everyone has left the table.

This method, of course, needs experience and precision—like a surgical operation, with everyone, valets, croupiers, and banquiers, playing their part. The only real masters of this art are the French.

Casino Administration also detailed a method of crimping cards for use in a dealing shoe:

This requires an associate of the cheating player—presumably an employee of the casino—to "crimp" the cards before play in the Corsican fashion—i.e. the key cards are bent by a machine, either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. The cards are so faintly impressed by bending that when they emerge from the shoe, where they have been pressed tight together, only a trained eye can detect the markings. The player

who knows where to look for these markings can then practically tell what cards are dealt to each side and to the bank.

The normal practice is to leave the tens and court cards uncrimped. Aces, twos, and threes are crimped one way; fours, fives, and sixes another way; sevens, eights, and nines in a third direction. It means that there are only four possible combinations of cards in these groups and the advantage to the player operating this method is fantastic. For example, if tableau number 1 has one uncrimped card plus a card crimped in the third fashion, the player knows it must have a total of seven, eight, or nine. If tableau number 2 has two cards crimped in the first fashion, it must have any total from two to six inclusive. If the bank has two uncrimped cards, then it must have baccarat or zero. Consequently, the cheat would bet on tableau number 1 where he has two chances to one of having a natural eight or nine which, in these circumstances, is unbeatable.

One of the most clever methods of cheating at any game occurred in a baccarat session in Monte Carlo's highfalutin salons privées. John Clark, a British amateur ventriloquist, was announcing banco bets, so that the sound seemed to come from another player. If the bank won, the startled player from whom the voice seemed to come denied having announced the bet; if the bank lost, Clark would speak up and claim that he had made the bet. The casino officials, knowing that something was afoot, quickly checked into Clark's background and learned that he was a ventriloquist!

In sessions where carding options are permitted, the player in cahoots with the banker can cheat other persons who have money riding at the table. This is usually done by the player signaling the value of his hand to the banker, so that the banker knows whether to take another card or stand.

Not all sessions of baccarat and its variants are held in casinos. In fact, one of the world's greatest scandals occurred because of alleged cheating at a private game in England. The game was being banked by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and one of the players, Sir William Gordon Cumming, was accused of sugaring his bet (a cheating technique explained above under "Roulette"). A very detailed account of this game and the following court trial was set forth in John Welcome's book *Great Scandals of Cheating at Cards*.

In some private sessions, such variations as slogger are played with a single deck of cards. In this case, most of the cheating methods used in blackjack (Chapter 8) can be applied. Watch especially for number-two men, marked cards, and peeking.

TRENTE-ET-QUARANTE (ROUGE ET NOIR)

This old game, still played in some European casinos, requires six decks of cards, as in baccarat. Only the dealer touches the cards, so that cheating by the players is difficult, except possibly for sugaring the bet, nudging, etc. The house's edge is made possible by a *refait* at 31, in which case the house takes half of all bets riding. The house can increase its winnings, or its take, by introducing a stacked sequence of cards that causes *refaits* at 31 more than would normally occur by chance.

Years ago, a group of Turks attempted to cold-deck Monte Carlo with a stacked sequence of *seven decks of cards*. Here's the story from *The Big Wheel*:

The men were seated at a trente-et-quarante table, and one of them asked for change of a 1,000-franc bill. When the money was brought to him, he unobtrusively dropped a gold coin to the floor, counted his change, and complained in a loud voice that twenty francs were missing. While two attendants crept under the table to look for the coin, another player asked for a glass of water, which he clumsily spilled on a

woman seated next to him. The third man got into an argument with the chef de parti as to whether the woman had jostled his friend's arm, causing the mishap.

The minor tempest was part of a deliberate scheme to distract attention from the croupier, who had been bribed by the trio to replace the cards in the distributing shoe with seven packs of cards stacked so that the Turks would win seven times in succession.

The coup went as planned, and the men won the fortune, but the croupier had not been able to remove all the old cards from the shoe, and the seasoned chef de parti, who counted to himself each card played, noticed that the croupier did not have to reshuffle after twenty-six rounds of play. He promptly stopped the game, counted the cards, and found that the shoe contained more than the regulation number. The croupier confessed, and the Turks were allowed to leave after returning the money.

FARO

I would guess that more money has been won and lost at faro than at any other casino card game. At one time (B.C. for before craps) faro was by far the most popular gambling game in this country; in 1864, for example, there were 163 gambling joints in Washington, D.C., and faro was the favorite game in all of them. But the game is seldom, if ever, played today.

Most of the cheating at faro involved gaffed dealing boxes. Some boxes were fixed so that the dealer had the advantage; others, so that the players had the advantage, although the dealer still handled the cards! These gaffed boxes were discussed in Chapter 3.

CHUCK-A-LUCK AND HAZARD

Also called birdcage, chuck-a-luck gives the house an edge of almost 8 percent. The game will seldom be gaffed in licensed casinos, but some operators are rather unethical because they tout the game up as an even bet. The game is, however, sometimes gaffed in juice joints. Electric dice are used in connection with magnets in the table under the cage. The dice are loaded all in the same way, so that when the electromagnets are energized, a pair or three-of-a-kind are likely to turn up, thereby reducing the player's chances of hitting his number.

The game of hazard, when played with a birdcage, can be juiced in the same way as chuck-a-luck.

BINGO AND KENO

So far as I can tell, both of these games are usually run honestly—but at a high house edge of something over 20 percent. Yet, bingo can be crooked—in a big way. The house, or operator, puts a shill in among the players. The shill has one or more cards bearing numbers that are known by the announcer, who then miscalls numbers to fill the shill's board. This of course prevents the payoff from being made to an honest player.

Warning: Because a bingo session is being sponsored by a church or some organization like the American Legion does not necessarily mean that it is honest. Often professionals will run such affairs for a percentage of the profits. They have been known to cheat the players—and then cheat the sponsoring organization by keeping more than their share of the profits!

Most of the cheating is done by the people who operate the bingo game, but it is possible for individual players to cheat. (Note, however, that it's still the players who lose; if a player bingos by a dishonest method, he is simply preventing another player from winning.) One method that has been used is to hide a legitimate number on a bingo card with a gaffed transparent marker. Another method is to ring in winning cards. According to a 1960 edition of the New York Sun, an elderly woman is known

to have clipped bingo operations (or rather, fellow players) from coast to coast for \$250,000.

The woman and her two accomplices would buy several thousand bingo cards from suppliers. Before going to a particular game, they would fill out a number of cards (which matched those in play). Then, at the right time, they would ring in a winning card and bingo! I'm not a bingo fan, but I understand that this sort of cheating has been curbed by using cards with serial numbers printed on them.

Aside from a high percentage edge, keno is no doubt honest when played in large casinos today. But I wouldn't want to play it just anyplace! Here's a rundown from Clyde Brion Davis's *Something for Nothing* on how keno has been gaffed in the past:

In 1852 there were so many keno dives in New Orleans that an ordinance was passed prohibiting the game as a nuisance. On the same grounds the thing was outlawed over most of the East by 1895. Keno by its nature lent itself to crookedness equally as well as three-card monte or the shell game.

It was common practice to use a crooked goose equipped with an inner holdout compartment. When there was a big game a shill or confederate would buy a card. The holdout compartment was loaded with the numbers to make keno on the shill's card and the goose, under control of the operator, "laid" those held-out numbers soon enough to prevent any lucky player's making keno before the shill.

It was probably because of this notorious talent of the keno goose that a wire mesh cage was substituted for the game of bingo. But also you can buy an automatic bingo cage for \$30 while a keno goose costs from \$150 upward.

Actually, the holdout appurtenance of the goose was completely unnecessary, for an operator with even elementary sleight-of-hand ability can easily substitute other numbered balls for those ejected by either keno goose or bingo cage, or, if no one is supervising, even simply call off different numbers from those on the balls—numbers of course which will form a line on the card of a confederate.

SLOT MACHINES

If any European aristocrats should happen to read these pages, there will no doubt be some raised eyebrows, and perhaps a dropped monocle or two, at my putting slot machines in the same chapter with roulette and baccarat! The fact remains that a good many more Americans gamble a good deal more money at slots than at roulette and baccarat combined.

An owner or operator of a slot machine can have it modified so that it never pays off a jackpot, or he can have the wheels arranged or gaffed so that the house edge is high enough to be called dishonest. But the fact is that slots in the better casinos are seldom if ever gaffed by the house. They don't have to be, those one-armed bandits!

By far most of the dirty work has been done by players trying to beat the machines. And, surprisingly enough, some cheats have been quite successful over the years, although the casinos and manufacturers usually counteract each new with design modifications. Here are some of the methods that have been used to beat the machines:

Drilling. Mechanics and others who are knowledgeable about the inner workings of slot machines (which have about 600 moving parts) have devised methods of drilling holes at certain points and then tampering with the mechanism with tiny wires. The drills are miniature devices and the holes are tiny and difficult to spot, especially when they are plugged with gum.

One drilling method is to drill a hole in front of a pin that activates the machine when a coin is inserted. After the hole is drilled, the cheat pushes against the pin with a wire. Thus, he can play the machine without putting any money into it.

There are several other methods of drilling, but all are ineffective on most modern machines because of boilerplate inserts and other protective measures.

Spooning. This method requires a piece of metal shaped rather like a spoon. The cheat inserts it into the payoff chute and operates a trapdoor under the jackpot. By proper manipulation, he can cause a few coins to drop out. If he stays long enough, he can empty the entire jackpot in this manner. But most slot machines have some sort of antispooning device on the trapdoor or in the chute.

Keys. A few cheats have been known to possess keys for opening the back of a slot machine. Once inside the thing, the cheat can tamper with the mechanism so that a jackpot will come up on the wheels. It's hard for a casino to detect this form of cheating unless the person with the key is caught in the act. Some cheats have been known to swallow the key!

Magnets. On older machines, magnets have been used to control the mechanism. Modern designers, however, have gotten around this problem by better selection of materials and proper location of parts inside the mechanism.

The rhythm method. One of the most ingenious methods of beating the machines cost many casinos and illegal slot operators a bundle of coin in the 1950's. By exquisite manipulation of the handle, it was possible to control the drop of one or more reels. The method, sometimes called reel timing, required a good deal of skill and practice—but it worked.

Word got around. Soon a five-dollar booklet on the rhythm method appeared for sale, and a rhythm-method school opened in Las Vegas for those willing to pay a stiff tuition. More and more people were getting into the act, which was entirely legal, regardless of whether or not it was honest. In short, one-armed bandits were shaking in their boots—until a variator device was installed in the machines to foil the rhythm players.

Today the rhythm method of playing slots is a waste of time, unless perhaps the psychoanalyst Robert M. Linder, Ph.D., had something when he said that playing slots is a substitute for sex, with hitting the jackpot likened to the orgasm. If Dr. Linder is right, then putting some rhythm into the act certainly won't hurt anything!

In June of 1973, after I thought I had finished this chapter, I read a UPI report (datelined Las Vegas) about slot machine cheaters stealing \$10 million a year in Nevada. According to District Attorney Roy Woofter, the cheaters are being trained in clandestine schools, and the teachers are receiving a percentage of the take! Woofter said that the cheating is being done with drills, magnets, and some sort of yo-yo coin. I inferred from the article, however, that most of the slots being hit are not in casinos but in small taverns, package liquor stores, and other such places. Although \$10 million seems like a high estimate, remember that there are a lot of licensed one-armed bandits in the state of Nevada— about 20,000 in Clark County alone.

15. Heads Or Tails

COULD IT BE that we humans have been playing heads or tails for ten thousand years? Some painted pebbles from the Old Stone Age, found in the French caves of Maz d'Azil, suggest the possibility. In her book *Heads I Win, Tails You Lose*, Charlotte Olmsted said,

No one, of course, knows for certain what these pebbles were used for—they are just pebbles, with enigmatic designs painted on them—but they are almost identical with painted pebbles used by many North American tribes for gambling purposes. These are flat, with the design on one side only, and are used by the Indians in a sort of "heads-or-tails" way, just like coins. Most archeologists agree that the Azilean pebbles probably were used in just the same way.

It is entirely probable that the pebbles were used for some sort of divination instead of for outright gambling. Tossing three coins six times provided a key to individual destiny in the Chinese oracle manual, *I Ching*, and, I understand, even today some Malaysians toss a coin to decide which side of the bed they should arise from each morning.

It is also entirely probable that gambling as we know it evolved from divination. As Alan Wykes speculated in *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Gambling*:

Gloomy forebodings or happy auguries were attributed to sticks, spears, and stones flung into the air and directed by the winds of fortune to land in certain positions.

One of these objects might have become a special totem or talisman—perhaps an unusual stone, thin and flat, light on one side and dark on the other. It would have been tossed into the air to let the side that landed uppermost decide important questions—such as where the best hunting would be found. Then someone might have perceived the advantages that could be gained by correctly guessing the result of throwing the talisman. And this might have led to competition between guessers. In time the stone would probably have lost its magical qualities, coming to represent simply two opposing chances that could be sided with. From there it would have been a simple step (adding excitement to the prophesying) to let some material possession be the prize for a correct guess. Man would have placed his first bet.

All this is pure conjecture. But if anything like it ever did happen, it is easy to see how coin tossing (as soon as there were coins) became a gamble. It is the simplest of all games of chance. The coin itself can, of course, be the prize; but it is more usual to have other material gains or losses at stake, and to use the coin merely as the deciding instrument.

I think that Wykes may have something. Anyhow, regardless of their origin, gambling games played with coins are here to stay. And they can be crooked. Here are some of the games and the gaffs:

Beveled coins. The sharper bets that if a coin is spun he can guess whether it will settle on heads or tails. He has almost a sure thing if he uses coins with beveled edges, as shown in Figure 87. If the coin is beveled toward the tails side, then it will settle on tails. Same for heads.

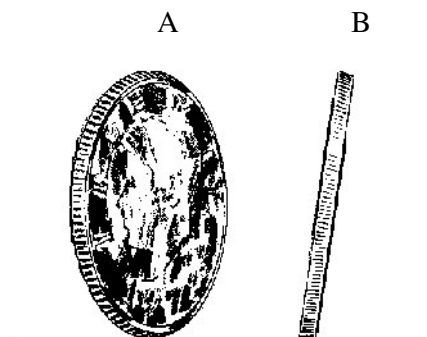


Figure 87

It is also possible to have a two-way beveled coin. The top half is beveled one way and the bottom half the other way. Whether heads or tails comes up depends on the coin's orientation when it is spun.

Any good machinist can bevel a coin within a few minutes, or sharpeners can purchase them from some magic shops at about \$1.50 per set—one beveled to spin heads, the other tails.

Nicked coins. The sharper bets that if a coin is spun behind his back, or when he is blindfolded, he can guess whether it will settle on heads or tails. The trick is to have a coin with a nick on one side. Toward the end of the spin, when the coin starts wobbling, it will run slower than normal on the nicked side and will make a slightly different sound that can be discerned by the practiced sharper. I've read that this gaff works best on a wooden surface.

Misfigured coins. There's something a little queer about seeing a two-headed quarter, so that the victim who discovers the gaff feels not only that he has been blatantly cheated but also that the principle of opposites has been violated!

I suppose the cheat with a knowledge of metalworking could make his own coins with two heads or two tails, but it's a good deal easier to purchase them from the magic shops. The two-headed quarter shown in Figure 88 was ordered through the mail for \$3.25. Pennies, nickels, dimes, and half-dollars are also available, in either



Figure 88

double heads or double tails. (How such coins are used for cheating will be discussed in the entries that follow.)

Odd man loses. The phrase *e pluribus unum* would make a fitting motto for a pair of cheats playing odd man loses. The game is usually played with three gamblers. If two cheats both have double-headed coins, the victim loses if he throws tails and he draws if he throws heads. In other words, the cheats can't lose as long as they show the same way.

If they don't have misfigured coins, the cheats can signal each other on which way to go. This technique could be used when the individual players choose, in the name of strategy, which way they want to go instead of tossing the coins into the air. They usually place their coin under concealment, and then all players open up at the same time.

Odd man wins. This one is similar to odd man loses, except that the cheats always go opposite ways. If one goes tails and the other heads, one or the other must win no matter what the sucker shows. Again, this can be done with misfigured coins or with signals. It can also be done by spinning beveled coins.

Odd man out. This game isn't as blatant for cheaters as odd man wins or odd man loses, but it still gives a pair of sharpers a decided edge over a sucker. The trick is that the cheats go opposite ways, so that one of them is sure to be eliminated from the competition. The remaining cheat then has a 50-50 chance of beating the victim by matching his coin or not matching it. The point is that the victim is never eliminated on the first go-around if the cheats always go opposite ways, either with misfigured coins or by signals. The result is that the victim will lose about half the time, whereas he should lose only about a third of the time.

You call it. Except for misfigured coins, it is difficult to gaff a coin that is to be tossed into the air and allowed to fall and come to rest on a flat surface. But if one of the bettors catches the coin and then plops it down on the back of his hand or on some surface, beware. He can, if he's good enough, turn up either heads or tails, depending on how his opponent calls, by feeling of the coin before he puts it down.

This sort of thing is easier with quarters and half-dollars than with smaller coins, and with new coins than with old. A few minutes' practice with a half-dollar should convince anyone of the possibilities.

A related sleight is to expose a coin in the palm so that a sucker sees it. Seeming to flip the coin over onto the back of his hand, the sharper says, "Call it for the drinks," or whatever the bet happens to be. The sucker of course calls the opposite from what he saw, thinking that the coin has been turned over. But he loses. He grabs the coin, but sees that it has two sides fair and square. What happened? The coin didn't really turn over; instead, the sharper turned his hand over on the coin. The move is fairly easy if the sharper starts the coin up a bit before flipping his hand over, so that the coin, for a moment, is sort of free-floating.

Two-up. Also called the penny game and the tossing game, two-up is often played in England and is very, very popular in Australia, where, by the way, it is illegal to bet on it. Two coins are placed flat on a stick, and the stickman or "spinner" tosses them into the air. The gamblers then bet whether they will land both heads or both tails. If one lands heads and the other tails, the toss is a draw.

The game can be gaffed by using misfigured coins, switched in and out by the spinner or by the bettors if they are allowed to pick the coins up after the toss. If two identical misfigured coins are switched in, the cheater has a sure thing. If only one misfigured coin is switched in, the cheater has a very, very high percentage edge—and a safer gaff.

I've heard that a banking variation of two-up is played in a big way for big money in some seaboard cities in this country, but I've never observed such sessions. Typically, such a banking game of two-up is operated by a professional gambler who takes a percentage of the bets.

When two regulation coins are tossed and allowed to settle on heads or tails, there are four possible combinations: H-H, T-T, T-H, and H-T. So, it's an even bet that the shooter comes out with either H-H or T-T, in which case he passes (wins) and continues to throw until H-T or T-H comes up. Side bets can be either wrong-way or right-way, as in craps!

16. Another Man's Game

JOHN W. "BET-A-MILLION" GATES, who would gamble on almost anything, and John Drake, son of a millionaire governor of Iowa, must have been a quizzical sight years ago as they sat in a Chicago hotel's restaurant intently watching flies buzz about two moistened lumps of sugar. They kept a tally of the flies that lit on their respective lumps, and at the end of a specified time period they paid off at \$1,000 per

fly. If, for example, fifteen flies lit on Gates's lump and ten on Drake's, then Gates would be \$5,000 ahead.

This oddball gamble seems fair enough, but it can be rigged. According to John Scarne, the sugar cubes used in a similar bet were gaffed by Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, the big-time gambler who opened the first plush casino on the Las Vegas Strip. Siegel bet mobster Willie Moretti \$5,000 that a fly would light on his cube first. Moretti accepted the bet. Siegel won. Suspecting a gaff, Moretti said he would bet again only if he could take Siegel's cube. Siegel accepted the change—and won again! The gaff? Both cubes of sugar had a drop of DDT on top. On the first bet, Siegel unobtrusively turned his cube over so that the DDT was on bottom. On the second bet, Siegel laid hands on the cubes under the pretense of moving them a little further apart. While doing so he turned the cubes over so that Moretti's new cube had the DDT on top! Countless bets of this sort have stuck the unwary with many a bar bill and stripped them of a good deal of cash as well.

Almost all proposition bets and offbeat gambles fall into one of four categories. Some proposition bets may border on the category of con games that are played on gamblers. I don't want to split hairs too closely, but I think there is a difference between the two. In a proposition bet, the sucker believes that he has either an even chance of winning or some fair advantage or percentage edge. In a con game, the victim must have downright larcenous intent. He is led to believe that he has some dishonest advantage, and the success of the con artist depends upon his skill in acting out an elaborate role designed to convince the sucker that he has a sure thing. I think the subject is interesting enough to merit a separate chapter, and I have dealt with it at length in Part Three. Meanwhile, here are the other types of proposition bets:

Percentage bets. Novice craps players in private games often fall for bets that seem equal but in fact give the knowledgeable player a percentage edge. Making the point 8, for example, seems to be an even bet because an 8, the sucker reasons, can be made with 6-2, 5-3, and 4-4 (three ways) whereas a 7-out can be made with 6-A, 5-2, 4-3 (also three ways). So, the sucker takes an even bet on making the point. But he should be getting odds of 6 to 5. Why? Because point 8 can actually be made with 6-2, 2-6, 5-3, 3-5, and 4-4 (five ways) whereas 7-out can be made with 6-A, A-6, 4-3, 3-4, 5-2, and 2-5 (six ways).

Another example: A sucker bets that he can cut to a certain card in 26 tries, reasoning that he has an even chance because 26 is exactly half the number of cards in the deck. The catch is that the deck is shuffled after each cut, in which case he would need 36 tries to have an even bet.

Poker dice with aces wild offer another proposition: The hustler bets a sucker that three-of-a-kind will show up more often than a single pair during a specified number of rolls. The sucker, knowing that pairs far outnumber triplets in regular poker with cards, jumps in with both feet. He gets them wet. It is a mathematical fact that triplets come up twice as often as single pairs in poker dice with aces wild! The odds are 2 1/5 to 1 against triplets and 5 1/2 to 1 against a pair!

There are dozens of such percentage bets involving birthdays, automobile license numbers, and so on. Most of them could not be called outright cheating, so that a full discussion is beyond the scope of this book. But a sucker for percentage bets would profit by reading carefully Oswald Jacoby's *How to Figure the Odds*.

The ambiguous proposition. By some trick of wording or implication, this sort of bet leaves the sucker with an impossibility. The old coin-tossing proposition "Heads I win, tails you lose" is a classic example of a bet that a sucker cannot possibly win. Another example: One poker player bets a sucker that he can't beat four aces with a royal straight flush. The sucker takes the bet, thinking that it involves a point of rule,

and starts quoting Hoyle. But the other player gets himself four aces from the deck and tosses the rest of the cards to the sucker, saying, "Here's my four bullets. Where's your royal straight flush?" Of course the sucker can't come up with a royal because all the aces have been removed from the deck. Whether or not the sharper can collect the bet, however, is another matter.

Scheme or system bets. These proposition bets involve some scheme or system of play that prevents the unknowing sucker from winning. The old match game is a good example—and it is still around. According to a report in *Gambler's Digest*, each year a Midwestern police department gets a few protests from suckers that have been taken in by the scheme. There are several variations of the match game, but the following quote from *Gambler's Digest* illustrates the principle:

You start with 15 matches in a heap, and two players alternate, removing one, two, or three at their option. The object of the game is not to take the last match. The person who takes it loses. If the insider draws first, he takes two matches and then continues to draw so that the victim will have an odd number to draw from each time. If he can force the victim to draw from 5 matches, he has him. Only when the victim can draw from four, three, or two matches can he win.

The prepared or gaffed proposition. Alvin Clarence Thomas is eighty years old and lives in Grapevine, Texas. Innocent motorists coming through that town would do well to argue with the road signs and had better refrain from making any proposition bets whatsoever. The old man is the notorious Titanic Thompson (Thompson is a misnomer for Thomas), high-rolling gambler and past master of the proposition bet. In his heyday, Ti had a certain manner about him—a haughty boastfulness or some such trait—that caused sensible men to try to beat him at his own game. They wanted to teach him a lesson, which of course was exactly what Ti was after. Here are a few of the many proposition bets that Ti is reported to have pulled off:

In Washington, D.C., he bet a bunch of sportswriters that he could throw a walnut farther than Walter Johnson, a famed baseball pitcher of the day. The match was arranged and Ti won—with a walnut gaffed with a lead slug. In a variation of this one, Ti bet a New York peanut vendor ten bucks that he could throw a peanut across Times Square. He won—with a peanut shell filled with lead.

Titanic Thompson was a very good golfer (just one stroke better, someone said, than the best golfer in the world) and could really hit a ball. On a Chicago course, he boasted to the country-club boys that he could drive a ball 500 yards. After placing several thousand dollars' worth of bets, Ti took the ball to a nearby lake, which was frozen hard. He drove the ball about 800 yards across the ice!

Apparently Ti clipped even Nicholas Dandolos with the golf-ball proposition. As quoted in *The Gambling Secrets of Nick the Greek*, Nick said Ti bet that he could drive a ball 300 yards. Nick accepted the bet—and Ti knocked the ball off a cliff. A year later, Ti made the same proposition, and, smiling, Nick replied that he would accept the bet if Thomas would not drop the ball off a cliff. Ti agreed to a "straight and level course." This time, Ti hit the ball across a frozen lake. So, Nick bit twice.

Another time, Ti dropped a bundle of money in a New York craps game. But he recouped his losses by wagering that he could pick up twenty-five hairpins along ten blocks in New York. He won. Before coming to the craps game, he had scattered several boxes of hairpins along the way!

Here's one that took even Arnold Rothstein and George McManus. While riding from Penn Station to the Jamaica track, the gamblers would bet on the number of white horses they could spot along the way. One day Ti "guessed" high—and won.

He had contracted with a livery stable to have eight white horses posted at various crossroads along the route.

In another stunt, Ti pulled up a road sign 20 miles from Joplin, Missouri, and placed it 5 miles closer to town. (Ti had married a girl in Joplin, but she didn't like his rambling ways and, as Ti put it, "married a more settled fellow called Pretty-Boy Floyd.") The next day, Ti and two local gamblers were riding along. Coming to the sign, Ti said the road department was crazy; it wasn't any 20 miles to Joplin. The two gamblers said it was, and Ti won \$1,000 from them.

Ti engineered his favorite proposition bet when he was an eleven-year-old boy in Arkansas. He took a fancy to the casting rigs used by some dudish fishermen who frequented the area. One day he bet one of the dudes that his dog, a water spaniel, could retrieve a rock from the bottom of the fishing hole. The fisherman put up the casting outfit against the dog, stipulating that the rock had to have a mark on it to show that it was the same one Ti would throw in. Ti consented. As soon as the rock splashed down, in went the spaniel. In a minute he was up with a marked rock. As Ti said, "What the dude didn't know, of course, was the bottom of the pond was covered with marked rocks!"

Moral of this chapter: Never play another man's game. Well, almost never. Titanic Thompson once won \$2,000 pitching horseshoes (which was a big gambling game in those days) from Frank Jackson, the world champion. Ti practiced his game at 41 feet instead of the regulation distance of 40 feet. When he played Jackson, in Minneapolis, it was on a court Ti had built. It was, of course, 41 feet long.

Even Thompson himself has been taken at his own game. On a golf course, he bet that poker fox Johnny Moss couldn't break 90 by using just a two-iron. Ti had previously raised the cups slightly, so that Moss might miss any putt that wasn't dead center. But Moss was wise to Ti and sent his caddy around the course to stomp the cups down. Ti lost the bet. So ... he wasn't unbeatable.

Still in all, the average gambler would do well to avoid any and all proposition bets. As a gambler told Nathan Detroit in one of Damon Runyon's stories, "Before I left home, my old daddy told me that one day I would meet a man who would show me a brand-new deck of cards and offer to bet that the jack of clubs would jump out and squirt cider in my ear. 'When you meet this man,' my daddy said, 'you do not bet with him! For just as sure as you do ... boy, you are going to wind up with an ear full of cider!' "

PART THREE: A LICENSE TO STEAL

It's morally wrong to allow suckers to keep money.

-CANADA BILL JONES

17. The Edge And The Ice

EXCEPT FOR some card-count situations that may occur in a partly depleted blackjack deck, all casino games are unfair in the sense that the gambler does not have an even chance against the house. This does not mean that the house is dishonest; it does mean that the house has an edge, a mathematical percentage working for it bet after bet, hour after hour, day after day. Players know this when they come to gamble. Theoretically, the casino is assured of winning over a long period of play and therefore need not cheat to come out ahead. The casino is assured of winning almost daily if several hundred people gamble in it. In many cases the casino is not really gambling, because one player will offset another's bet. Consider roulette. Player A bets \$100 on red; player B, \$100 on black. If red wins, the house collects from A and pays it to B. In this case, the casino cannot lose—and it wins both players' bets when the ball stops on 0 or 00. Yet because the casino is assured of winning does not necessarily mean that it will show a profit. It must provide an expensive roulette layout, personnel to run it, a place in which to use it, and so on. There are utility bills to pay and licenses to buy. The casino must often provide free drinks and expensive entertainment, lest the customers take their business to another casino. I've read that a large casino must win \$25,000 a day just to pay running expenses. It's easy to see how the overhead might be higher than the winnings.

The fact is, however, that most of the big licensed casinos in Nevada can and do operate at a profit under competent management. Casinos that have lots of customers make so much money, and have so many millions invested, that to risk losing their license by cheating would be sheer folly.

But a crucial question must be asked. Would a large casino indeed lose its license if it were caught cheating? If you, for example, detected a blackjack dealer peeking and then dealing seconds, would the authorities take your word against the dealer's when a multi-million-dollar casino's reputation and license are at stake? If such an accusation stuck and the authorities confirmed that the dealer was cheating, would the casino lose its license or would the dealer be used as a scapegoat? Are the authorities themselves honest?

In Nevada, the State Gaming Control Board is in charge of enforcing gaming laws and regulations, investigating license applicants, and auditing casino records. The top people on the Control Board are appointed by the governor, who may have accepted campaign contributions from gambling interests. This leaves room, or opens the way, for graft, just as in any political bureau having cognizance over any corruptible activity involving a lot of money. At the lower levels, some of the investigators and undercover agents who work for the Control Board are relatively low-salaried, so that they are open to bribe.

I'm not saying that any sort of corruption is evident or suspected in the present administration in Nevada. But the possibility can't be entirely ruled out. And if the current administration is thoroughly honest and spotless from top to bottom, who can speak for the years to come? Evidence of such corruption in the past was set forth in *The Green Felt Jungle* (by Ed Reid, a Pulitzer Prize winner, and Ovid Demaris) in 1963 and in *Gamblers Money* (by Wallace Turner, also a Pulitzer Prize winner) in 1965. In fact, legalized gambling was abolished in Nevada during the early 1900's because of corruption. Louisiana, California, New Mexico, and Arizona have all tried legalized gambling to attract tourists, but it didn't work out because of gangsters and corruption.

Maybe I'm wrong, but I think that the general honesty (as compared to isolated cases) of gambling in Nevada will ultimately rest with the voters in the state. They probably won't be given the opportunity to vote directly for or against gambling at the polls, but they can vote in reform candidates. It is to the state's advantage that the

governmental and regulatory bureaus as well as all the licensed casinos maintain their integrity. Although large-scale gambling has caused some civil and sociological headaches for Nevada, it also brings a good deal of money into the state in taxes, trade, and jobs. The gambling industry draws 60,000 tourists each day. Over 35,000 people are employed directly in gambling and 55,000 other jobs are attributable to it. So, there's a lot of money at stake, and if gambling should become too corrupt, the state would no doubt react.

Such a reaction occurred a few years ago when it became evident that mobsters were infiltrating the gambling industry at an alarming rate. In 1955, the newly created Control Board inaugurated a policy to eliminate the "undesirable elements" in Nevada's gambling industry. The Board now keeps the dread "Black Book," a list of known underworld figures who are not allowed in Nevada casinos. Today it is difficult for a mobster or any other undesirable character to obtain a casino owner's license or even a work permit in Nevada. Here's the procedure as published by the Control Board:

The first step in the licensing procedure is the filing of a personal history record and invested capital questionnaire by the prospective licensee. The personal history questionnaire asks current personal and business information, plus names, occupations, and addresses of relatives; arrest record, civil and criminal court action record, military record, places of residence, and former jobs for entire lifetime, character references, and gambling background. A recent picture must be included, and the applicant must also submit his fingerprints.

In the invested capital questionnaire, the applicant must divulge his financial history, current assets and liabilities, and all information pertaining to his proposed investment. This includes the source of his funds, the proposed method of repaying loans, and interest rates.

Once this information is provided, the investigators take over. Fingerprints are sent to the FBI in Washington, D.C., for a check of any possible criminal record, and Control Board agents check their own intelligence files, which are among the most complete in the nation. More than 150,000 index cards refer researchers to more than 13,000 arrest records and more than 10,000 reference folders. In addition, more than 20,000 Nevada gambling work permit applications and cards are on file.

Each applicant is checked from birth. The investigation may take several months, and cost \$5,000 or more. The expense of the investigation is borne entirely by the applicant, and is not refundable if he is denied a license.

Obviously, it's a good deal easier these days for a reputable capitalist like Howard Hughes to get a license than for a mobster like Bugsy Siegel. One real good reason for ousting the mobsters is that they have been known to "skim" the casino winnings; in other words, they took money from the winnings without recording it, so that there was no accurate record for tax purposes. This skimming has cost the state of Nevada and the federal government millions of dollars.

The Gaming Control Board also has the power to revoke or suspend licenses for cheating or other causes, and they have on occasion exercised that power. Their undercover agents observe the play at various casinos, and from time to time they pick up cards and dice from casino tables and take them to a laboratory in Carson City for inspection. If the agents are successfully "undercover" and are honest, this policy should all but eliminate the use of marked cards, gaffed dice, and so on. Casino owners, with millions invested, would indeed be foolish to use any sort of gaffed equipment—unless the dealer and pit bosses can recognize the state agents or know when they will be making their rounds.

Another problem with casino gambling is that crooked dealers may work in an honest house. They cheat some players and let their buddy win, later getting part of the take. The casinos themselves guard against this sort of thing by having highly experienced pit bosses, together with such surveillance techniques as one-way mirrors and closed-circuit television. I wrote to Harolds Club for some information about their surveillance methods, but their public-relations man replied that they would not disclose these secrets for competitive reasons. I wrote back that they were brushing me off. He brushed me off again by return mail. But I managed to dig up a newspaper clipping on the subject:

Gaming officials call it the "eye in the sky," dealers call it the "lookout," and patrons call it "all those mirrors." Potential cheaters have other names for it. Basically, it's a deterrent.

The method is a system of strategically placed two-way mirrors.

A lookout for Howard Hughes-owned Harolds Club began as a dealer and worked his way through each game the house offers. He is completely familiar with table game operations and is no newcomer to slot machines.

"We'll start here," he said as he approached a tiny shaft containing a wooden ladder. It led to the caverns of the club, the silent "eye in the sky" few have entered, let alone having ever obtained permission to enter.

For the next half hour a maze of catwalks, heating and cooling pipes, [and] slots unfolded that exposed every game and slot machine in the club's four gaming floors.

Each window slot—mostly gained on hands and knees —exposed another section of the casino.

The surveillance techniques are of course designed to catch crossroaders, who cheat Nevada casinos out of millions of dollars each year, as well as to keep the casino employees honest. What happens if a dealer is caught cheating the house? He loses his job and finds it difficult to work anywhere in Nevada. Stronger measures have been reported. Here's a quote from *The Green Felt Jungle*:

The authors know of three specific incidents where cheating dealers were dragged into the counting room to be taught a lesson. The counting room, which is behind the cashier's cage, is a soundproof room, ideal for such torture. One dealer was held by two goons, while his closed fists were placed on the table. Another goon wielded a lead-encased baseball bat and brought it down on the dealer's hands, smashing them beyond repair. The dealer was then dragged through the casino, with blood dripping from his crushed fingers. His hands were bandaged by one of the mob's doctors, who was instructed not to set the bones. Then he was driven to the edge of town and his shoes were taken from him. "Now, you son-of-a-bitch," he was told, "walk to Barstow. No goddamn hitchhiking, either. We're gonna check on you all the way." Barstow is over 150 miles away, all of it desert.

Why, then, would a dealer risk his job, and possibly his hands, to cheat? For money, that's why.

All in all, a gambler simply cannot rule out the possibility of being cheated in a Nevada casino either by the house or by an individual dealer. Edward Thorp, Allan Wilson, and others have gone on record, in cold print, by saying they personally have been cheated in Nevada casinos. That a casino is closed down from time to time is a fact. The most alarming account of such cheating that I've run across appeared in *Saga* magazine. Here's part of the article:

Frank Johnson, chairman of the Nevada Gaming Control Board, became dissatisfied with his enforcement division's apparent inability to confirm rumors that crooked dice were being used in a certain club. So he sent two deputy attorney generals into the casino in Reno to shoot dice and see if they noticed anything suspicious. A few minutes later a deputy attorney general named John Sheehan grabbed the dice and said that certain numbers were missing from each die and thereby made it impossible for a customer—or rather sucker—to throw a 5 or 9 point. Consequently the three-member Gaming Board suspended the hotel's gambling license and forced it to close its casino until the charges could be disproven before the parent State Gaming Commission.

"So what" is the way some casino executives reacted. "It's just an isolated incident like back in '63." Back in 1963 a casino in Las Vegas was closed because an employee allegedly shaved dice, but no evidence of cheating was found in Nevada's other casinos. This time, however, things were different. Exactly one month after the hotel casino was closed, the Gaming Control Board shut down another big casino on charges that one of its stickmen allowed customers to establish their points with legitimate dice but then slipped in mis-spotted pairs of dice between rolls and therefore made it impossible for anyone to attain points 4, 6, 8, and 10—or one helluva lot of crapping-out. The undercover agents became suspicious of the stickman, the Gaming Control Board charged, when they saw him handling the dice and reaching into his apron. A secret compartment in the apron is where the agents allegedly found four of the five pairs of mis-spotted dice. The fifth pair was said to have been in the stickman's pants pocket.

A development two weeks later in Carson City, Nevada, underscored the fact that the use of crooked gambling equipment in casinos could be considered more "widespread" than "isolated." Johnson directed a raid on a workshop garage rented by a former salesman of gambling equipment, and at that time a dealer in a Carson City casino. According to Johnson, he and other officials confiscated "large quantities" of magnetized roulette balls, marked cards, and crooked dice which, in many instances, contained the names of famous casinos in Nevada.

Were these crooked dice and cards going to be used in the casinos? You can be damn certain, when considering the dealer's connections and proximity to the casinos, that he wasn't loading the dice to be used in crap games in Indianapolis. You can be equally certain that few—if any—of the people affiliated with the casinos were about to admit ordering the crooked dice and cards. Most such places are well experienced in denying purchases of crooked dice. Look what happened back on March 19, 1963, when the Cook County (Illinois) Sheriff's police investigators raided a gambling supply house in Chicago and allegedly found among the multitude of dishonest gambling equipment several crates of loaded dice with the names of 17 well known casinos stamped on them.

Whereupon, the chairman of the Nevada Gaming Control Board flew to Chicago to investigate the situation and reached this conclusion: Casinos in Nevada did purchase considerable quantities of legitimate dice from that company. But the crooked dice bearing the names of 17 casinos had probably been ordered by individuals who planned to cheat the casino and not by the casino. End of investigation.

In spite of the Saga article and other accounts, I'm certain that cheating in a licensed casino is, today, the exception rather than the rule. The rule is that most gamblers are going to lose anyway because they simply don't know how to bet their money; even if they do quit winners, they are happy to win a modest amount—say, enough to pay for their trip. The exception is the player who knows how to gamble and may walk away with a piece of the house.

My conclusion is that the average person can gamble in any licensed casino without fear of being cheated. But when a real gambler gets ahead and parlays the house's money and keeps on winning, he had better be on his toes. A good time for him to pocket his winnings and go home, or at least take his action to another casino, is when the house changes dealers on him. This is especially true whenever the house changes dealers before the regular shift is up.

Finally, let me say that in my opinion the house is more likely to run a mechanic in at a blackjack table than at any other casino game. This is because a good mechanic at blackjack doesn't require marked cards or any other gaff that would make physical evidence. It is extremely difficult to prove that a dealer is peeking or dealing seconds or stacking the deck. On the other hand, the trend toward multideck play and "regulation" dealing shoes does give the player more protection while playing blackjack.

By the way, anyone who has good reason to believe that he was cheated in a Nevada casino should get in touch with the Gaming Control Board at 515 Musser Street, Carson City, or Suite 120 at 302 East Carson Street, Las Vegas. I do not recommend that he make a public accusation. According to a pit boss at the Dunes, a person can be jailed in Nevada for accusing a dealer of cheating without being able to prove it.

If a gambler has a choice of casinos, I would recommend the ones that have been in business for a long time and have lots of customers. I say this not so much because a large number of customers indicates that the play is honest, but because a lively business almost assures the casino of a handsome profit, thereby eliminating (in most cases) the urgent need to win more than the normal percentage take.

Whereas a legal casino stands a chance of losing its license if it is caught cheating, the illegal joint really has nothing to lose, except customers, by being crooked. Although some illegal gambling establishments can, and do, operate at a profit by being honest, many are not satisfied with winnings from the usual percentage edge. They want more money faster because they are in a high-risk business. They could lose their investment on a single raid. Their equipment and even their bank money can be confiscated. The operators could go to jail. Moreover, they are not likely to be as concerned about their reputation as, say, Harolds Club, because they are not likely to be in business for many years. Even if they buy off the cops, they can count on being in business only until the current political term expires. In many cases, having to pay "ice" money to take the "heat" off runs up the overhead so much that the operators almost have to cheat to show a profit. Sometimes ice has to be spread all the way from the cop on the beat up to the mayor and the district attorney and the county sheriff. Possibly even the state legislators and the governor. Sometimes even newspaper reporters and such people with similar positions, but with no official status, have to be paid to withhold their comments.

Examples of this sort of corruption could be dug up from every state. Here's a report on a large roundup in Michigan: 400 FBI agents arrested 151 persons, including a Detroit police inspector, three lieutenants, six sergeants, one detective, and five patrolmen. Another report from the FBI: "December 3, 1971, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, two former New Orleans police officers, and seven persons connected with pin ball gambling machine operations were indicted by a federal grand jury on a charge of conspiring to obstruct law enforcement by bribing public officials."

Although political graft and wholesale cheating are quite common in unlicensed gambling operations, it would be misleading to imply that all illegal casino-type operations are crooked in the sense of using gaffed equipment and card mechanics. Some operators believe that honesty is the best policy, and may even practice that policy. In the past such operations have included the plush gambling places of

Richard Canfield in New York and of Colonel Edward Riley Bradley in Palm Beach, Florida. At the other extreme, there are some joints where I wouldn't expect a fair shake, and, in fact, would not want to make a win from the house because I would be afraid to walk out the door with it.

From a practical viewpoint, the card mechanic or any sort of sharper operating in unlicensed casino-type games have little to fear, legally, for cheating as such. If they are caught in a craps game, they may be prosecuted for gambling but seldom for using gaffed dice. As far as I can tell, the local cops seldom make a distinction between illegal gambling and crooked gambling. It's all gambling.

In private games, the situation is a little more favorable. But not much. Whether or not private gambling in one's home or club is legal or illegal from state to state, the general practice is that the cops don't interfere as long as the game doesn't disturb the peace or cause some other problem. (There are exceptions, of course. One of the more common reasons for "warning" raids on private games is that some loser's wife complains to the authorities.) That cheats working private games can be successfully prosecuted was shown by the six convictions in the Friar's Club case, which was discussed in Chapter 1.

Still, it is extremely difficult to convict a sharper for cheating. Consider a case that occurred in Cuba some years ago. According to *Sharps and Flats*:

A Spanish sharp, named Bianco, purchased in his own country a tremendous stock of playing-cards; and, in view of the undertaking in which he was about to embark, he opened every one of the packs, marked all the cards, and sealed them up again in their wrappers. This he did so skilfully that there was no evidence of the fact that the packages had ever been tampered with. The stupendous feat involved in a proceeding of this kind being successfully accomplished, the cards were shipped off to Havana and there disposed of to the card-dealers at a ruinous sacrifice. So good indeed were these cards, and so cheap, that in a very little while the dealers could not be induced to purchase those of any other make. Thus after a time there were hardly any cards circulating in the place other than those which had been falsified by Bianco.

Bianco, being a man of "good address," quickly gained entry into the best gambling circles. All went well until another sharp, a Frenchman named Laforcade, took some cards home with him to mark. He was, of course, surprised to find them already marked, and after tracing the cards to Bianco he pulled off a clever blackmail. He, Laforcade, would say nothing providing that Bianco would give him half the profits—for doing nothing but keeping his mouth shut. Bianco reluctantly agreed. Thus, Laforcade made a good deal of money at no risk.

But the supply of marked cards began to dwindle, and Bianco began to tire of the arrangement. Suddenly he left Cuba, and Laforcade found himself without income but with newly acquired expensive tastes. There were still some marked cards in play, so he decided to make the best of them. But he was caught cheating, and the marked cards were exposed. As Maskelyne summed up:

Even in this unfortunate predicament Laforcade's good fortune, strange to say, did not desert him. He was taken before the Tribunal, tried, and acquitted. Absolutely nothing could be proved against him. It is true the cards were marked, but then, so were nearly all the others in Havana. Laforcade did not mark them, as was proved in the evidence. He did not import them. To all intents and purposes, he had nothing to do with them whatsoever. It could not even be proved that he knew of the cards being marked at all. Thus the case against him broke down utterly, and he got off scot free.

Most similar cases have also been dismissed. In fact, it is often more dangerous legally for the victim to accuse the sharper than it is for the sharper to cheat in the first place. If the accusation can't be proved, the victim of the cheat may find himself being sued for slander or defamation of character. Anyone who has any doubts about how difficult it is to prove that a player is cheating, or that an innocent player has been unjustly accused, should read John Welcome's *Great Scandals of Cheating at Cards* and Terence Reese's *Story of an Accusation*.

It is also dangerous for the victim of a cardsharp to take the law into his own hands. If he shoots the sharper, he may find himself facing a murder charge, and pleas of "he needed to be shot" may not help enough. If one affronts the sharper, he may find himself looking down the barrel of a snub-nosed .38 or may even face an assault charge.

Ideally, I feel that the cheat ought to be exposed to society. But, from a practical viewpoint, this is seldom advisable for any one individual; what he stands to gain, unless his losses are very large, simply isn't worth the risk. The prudent action often depends on the circumstances and whether or not it is a house game or a private game. Here's a recap of what I said on this subject in my book *Poker Strategy and Winning Play*:

If a professional cheat like a number-two man worms his way into a social game, he'll usually leave if you let him know that you suspect him. I once "detected" a mechanic in a private game whose seconds looked good but sounded as though he were dealing sheets of sandpaper. He was dealing out a hand of five-card stud, and his second up card was an ace.

"Well, what-do-ya-know?" he said, as if pleased at his luck.

"It *looked* pretty good," I said.

Quickly the guy cut his eyes my way. He knew that I suspected him, and as far as I know he didn't cheat any more that night. He didn't come back, either. Yet I hadn't accused him of anything, and only one of the other players ever knew what had gone on.

If you detect a cheat in a house game, talk privately to the man who runs the joint. If he is honest himself, or if he is a good businessman, he'll appreciate your tip. Then if his observations bear out your suspicions, he'll ask the cheat not to come back.

Some house games, however, are run by a mob of cheats. Some private games are, too. In this case, I suggest that you do as I did when I caught a group of football players passing cards to each other back when I was a freshman at Auburn University. Did I slap a tackle and punch a guard in the nose? No. I stood up, straightened my tie, and said, "Excuse me, gentlemen, but I have an algebra exam in the morning!"

18. Welshers, Paperhangers And Bad Losers

IT IS CLEAR that the gamblers themselves—whether they be crooked or honest—are sometimes the victims of swindles, extortion, and even blackmail. Gamblers also find themselves on the short end of the stick legally when it comes to collecting gaming debts. It's fairly common knowledge that checks and IOU's given while gambling are not collectable by legal means in most states. In one case, a gambler stopped payment on a \$600 check and a court ordered him to honor the debt. The gambler appealed and a higher court ruled the check void—and then stuck the other gambler, the victim of the bad check, with court costs of \$111.86!

But the matter goes further. Sometimes even cash winnings have to be refunded! In a New Jersey case, for example, a bank employee lost \$2,100 to a bookmaker. Then he lost \$18,000 of the bank's money. The court ruled that the bookmaker had to refund the money to the bank. In this instance, the gambler was using money that belonged to another party, but even individuals have been known to recover their own

losses. Here's an account from *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*:

Many states now permit the losers in gambling transactions to recover from the winners. In the case of Bam-man v. Erickson, it was contended that the provisions of the New York statute should be limited to casual bettors and not apply to the habitual customers of a bookmaker. In that case, a lawyer named Austin had placed bets amounting to over \$200,000 with Erickson, a bookmaker. The latter was sued by the assignee of Austin for the recovery of his money. The court held that there is nothing in the statute which prevents the habitual bettor, as distinguished from the casual bettor, from recovering his losses from the professional gambler.

The customers of a bookmaker occasionally win, even though they more often lose. When they sue to recover their losses, under a statute which permits them to do so, may the bookmaker counter-claim to the extent of his own losses to the customer? In Watts v. Malatesta, the court refused to permit any such offset. The court pointed out that the professional gambler or the bookmaker and the customer or horse player do not stand on the same plane. It is not criminal for a man to make a bet, but it is criminal for the bookmaker to accept a bet. If the law were to lend its aid to the bookmaker in recovering his money, it would sanction a criminal act. Accordingly, the court authorized a recovery by the customer of his losses without any offset of his winnings.

Clearly, the professional gambler doesn't have much to stand on, legally, and must often resort to strong-arm techniques to collect. The laws that inhibit the gamblers (and such laws date back to the Romans) vary from state to state, but most of them were designed to curb excessive betting. By making IOU's, checks, mortgages, etc., "utterly void, frustrate, and of none effect," the lawmakers hoped to limit losses to cash money so that individuals would not be ruined by gambling.

Generally, however, the laws are ineffective. In my experience, most professional and non-professional gamblers pay their debts if they can. (Bank employees and people with similar jobs have been known to embezzle money in order to pay gambling debts!) They value their reputation. The more often they gamble, the more important it is for them to have good credit and checking privileges. In fact, the whole structure of illegal bookmaking today is based on mutual trust between the bookmaker and his customer; most of the bets on football and other sporting events that are made through bookmakers around the country are placed over the telephone. What system could possibly require more honesty?

I've never made book, but I have taken quite a few checks and IOU's at the poker table. The record has been surprisingly good, but I have been stuck from time to time. In one "social" game, I ended up with a bundle of bad checks. The guy who wrote them wasn't a habitual paperhanger—but he just got in over his head. This was really rough on me since I was already heavy loser in the session and in fact had to cover some checks I had given to the winners.

In spite of what the laws say, I feel that a man ought to have to honor his gambling debts. If he doesn't, either he is a crook or else he is fool enough (or sick enough psychologically) to gamble beyond his means. On the other hand, I think that an individual gambler should be able legally to stop payment on a check if he is certain that he was cheated. I've never stopped payment on a check, but I have known gamblers who have, and I think justifiably. In one case, a friend of mine lost his company payroll check on a big hand in a hotel game we had gone to. He had been cold-decked—no question about it. He recognized the setup and had the gall to accuse them of cold-decking him.

"I resent that," said the kingpin of the crew, who had turned up a pat wheel.

"How the hell do you think I feel about it?" asked my friend, standing to leave.

I got up too. When we were at the door, the sharpers pointed out that he had not endorsed the payroll check. My friend informed them that he had no intentions of endorsing it, and we left fast.

The next day, he told his company that he had lost the check downtown. The statement was true enough, as far as it went! No, he hadn't endorsed it. Yes, they could stop payment. The gamblers forged his name on the check, but it didn't go through. In time my friend got a new check.

The cold deck and other knockout cheating techniques were frequently used on ocean liners a few years ago. Since the victims were not likely to carry a good deal of cash, the sharpers' big win depended on whether the checks would clear the bank. Often they didn't, simply because the victims of the big hands realized later that they had been set up. If this happened too often, the sharpers would go broke, since they had to travel first-class and had to establish themselves as gentlemen with money. So, they came up with a neat ploy to convince the victim that all was well.

Typically, several of the sharpers gain the confidence of a sucker and lure him into a friendly game of cards for modest stakes. Then, toward the end of the voyage, the rich sucker is dealt an extremely good hand, such as the Mississippi heart hand in bridge. He bets a good deal of money, usually by check, on what he thinks is a sure thing. When the hand is over, the winner, a seemingly perfect gentleman, says that the game had gotten out of hand. He tears up the check and burns it. Then the game returns to normal stakes. The victim is greatly relieved and his suspicions of foul play are dispelled, since he saw the check destroyed. But he's in for a surprise when his bank statement arrives. The slicker tore up another check and slipped the real one into his pocket!

In Chapter 10, it was pointed out that President Warren G. Harding, when he was a United States senator, tore up a check that he owed to a sharper who, together with his accomplices, had cheated him in a bridge game aboard a train. Apparently the practice is not only legal but also socially acceptable, at least in many cases. In short, the sharper and the professional gambler are hard put to collect gambling debts legally.

In England the situation is currently more favorable, at least for the licensed gamblers. Clause 16 of the Gaming Act of 1968 declares that checks given to licensed gambling establishments are collectable under the law, provided that such a check is not post-dated and that it is taken to the bank for collection within two banking days. No other form of credit is allowed under the law.

Bad checks have always been a serious problem for casino management, and the Gaming Act seems to be good news for British gambling houses. It is important to note that some people unload bad checks on casinos for the purpose of gaining cash, not primarily a gambling stake. For example, if I gave a \$1,000 check in a casino, lost \$600 to make it look good, and pocketed the rest, I would be \$400 ahead on the deal. In this case, legal action should be one of the licensed casino's recourses. But it doesn't solve all the bad-check problems, especially in regard to a good customer who has gotten in over his head. Here's a sensible statement on this matter from Judah Binstock's *Casino Administration*:

Few aspects of the gaming industry's activities have been projected more misleadingly than its attitude to debt recovery. In the minds of many of the public, gaming is still as it sometimes was in the dark ages of Al Capone, with intimidation and other unsavoury tactics used to recover debts not recognised by the law. This is an absurdly archaic and erroneous picture; in the first place, gaming debts are, of course, now recoverable at law under the new Gaming Act. Beyond this, it is neither

fair nor truthful to represent the modern gaming industry as relentless in the matter of debt collection.

In the opinion of the General Manager of one large London casino, it is ludicrous to suggest that gaming managements will readily consider resorting to law for full recovery of such debts, even though they can now do so. This will rarely happen, in his assessment, for one very good reason: That casinos are dependent for their commercial success upon the friendliness of the atmosphere that exists around their tables. If they once began pressing hard and mercilessly for money owed, this invaluable climate of goodwill would be swiftly dispersed.

This operator believes that, when a player loses heavily and cannot pay, it will become common practice to ask him how much of his debts he can afford to put down. If he says 25 per cent, he may then be told that on future visits he will not be allowed further credit but can play for cash. If he then wins, it will be suggested, half of what he wins will go towards paying off his old debt and the other half will be his to keep.

Binstock, an owner of the Victoria Sporting Club, added that the only time he ever wanted to take a gambler to court was when a foreign gambler won £47,000 in two days, gave a bad check for £20,000 losses the next day, and then left the country! Clearly this was a case of an outright welsher taking advantage of professional gamblers.

The biggest single instance of welshing that I know about occurred when the notorious Arnold Rothstein refused to honor IOU's for half a million dollars, as mentioned in Chapter 11. He had been playing poker with Titanic Thompson, Joe Bernstein, Abe Silverman, George McManus, and others. Toward the end of the session, they started betting high card for enormous amounts, and Rothstein started paying off with IOU's, although he had pocketed some cash from the game. Thompson said it hadn't been very smart of them, but they figured that Rothstein would pay off. He didn't. After a few days he started claiming that he had been cheated. Two months later he was shot at the Park Central Hotel in New York. George McManus was accused of the murder, but was acquitted at the trial. Thompson swore on the witness stand that the game had been honest, but he said in a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated* that Rothstein had indeed been cheated. An irony is that if Rothstein had lived through the day (November 4, 1928) he would have won \$500,000 on the presidential election!

The big gamblers (or businessmen) who own or manage large casinos have problems in addition to bad debts. They are blackmailed and cheated in various ways. In the simplest cases, a player disputes a payoff or a bet, knowing that some casinos would rather be cheated out of a little money than make a scene at the gaming tables. There is, however, a limit—usually one such incident—before the chiseler is invited out.

Pickpocketing is a problem in large, crowded casinos, and sometimes the management will make up for the losses as a matter of public relations. But some people, usually heavy losers, will take advantage of the casino by claiming to have had their pockets picked while gambling. It's pretty easy to rationalize this sort of thing; they were just trying to get back some of their losses, some of their own money.

Other gamblers will plead with the casino to return their losses, and will sometimes succeed in getting back at least part of their money. Some casino managers have in fact been taken pretty heavily by a sob story. Colonel Edward Riley Bradley of the famous Beach Club used to tell, on himself, how he was sucked in. Here's an account from Clyde Brion Davis's *Something for Nothing*:

Several versions of a tale are told about a girl who took Bradley for several thousand dollars one night. Jimmy Cannon in the New York Post has it \$12,000 and Cleve land Amory \$5,000. We might split the difference and make it \$8,500.

In the story's salient details, the girl went to Bradley's private office in the club and tearfully declared she and her husband were in Palm Beach on their honeymoon and that he had lost their entire stake for married life at this crooked old gambling house. The Colonel studied her and was moved to sympathy.

"All right, young lady," he said, "I'll return your money, but only on one condition—neither you nor your husband must ever enter this house again."

The girl agreed readily and pointed out her husband, a young man who was just leaving the club. "But please don't speak to him," she said. "He doesn't know I came to you."

So Bradley paid over the \$8,500 and the girl blessed him fervently and departed.

The next evening the Colonel spotted the young man spreading chips around the roulette layout as if nothing had happened. Bradley had him brought to his office and spoke to him severely. "In the first place," he said, "you can't afford to gamble, and in the second place your wife promised that neither she nor you would ever enter this place again."

The young man was set back on his heels. "My what?" he cried. "Look, Colonel Bradley, I'm not even married." Then he identified himself as a man who surely could afford to gamble if he wished.

Some other incidents along this line have not been appeals to the casino owner's finer nature but rather to his fear of adverse publicity. Suicides resulting from gambling have always been bad news to the casinos. (A wave of suicides at Monte Carlo once caused officials to stuff a wad of money into the pocket of anyone found dead, so that the incident would not be attributed to gambling losses. Reportedly, a slicker quickly took advantage of this. He was found "dead," and had smeared tomato paste on his body. Two guards found him and quickly put money into his pockets. When they returned a few minutes later to make an official discovery, he was gone!) Anyhow, the threat of suicide has been used to blackmail casino owners or managers into returning all or part of a gambler's losses. Moreover, journalists have been known to blackmail casinos by threatening to publish a suicide story.

And even stronger threats have been used by bad losers. There is a story about a laboratory assistant who threatened to contaminate New York City's water supply with bacteria of bubonic plague unless he was returned \$20,000 of gambling losses! The guy was caught and did indeed have a vial of the bacteria on his person.

A more fantastic but authenticated story comes from Monte Carlo: A yachtsman who called himself Archibald Grant dropped 200,000 francs at the gaming tables. He went to the manager's office and asked for the money to be returned. When refused, he said he was really a privateer and that his yacht, which had originally been built for the Sultan of Morocco, was armed with cannon. In perfect seriousness, Grant threatened to level Monte Carlo if the money wasn't aboard his yacht within two hours.

Just to be on the safe side, casino officials went out to the yacht—and were astounded by the presence of four cannon! Quickly Grant got the 200,000 francs! Henceforth, he was barred from the gaming rooms of Monte Carlo.

I'm certain that more than one clean-cut cop has been lured into a gambling mob's trap. Once he deviates from his line of duty, he is bribed or blackmailed into further cooperation. But the reverse is also true: Public officials have been known literally to extort ice payoffs from gamblers. According to the FBI, for example, the mayor and a

police chief of a Pennsylvania town were indicted for conspiring to seek payoffs to allow illegal gambling.

In other cases, the officials enforce the law all right but pocket the normal fines or demand higher payoffs. George Devol and other gamblers have reported incidents of this sort of thing. Years ago in Wheeling, West Virginia, gamblers were picked up, quickly convicted in court, fined \$1,000, and sentenced to prison. After a few days behind the bars, they were offered their freedom in exchange for every cent they owned. Most of the gamblers paid off, and the money (according to one gambler) was divided between the mayor, the district attorney, and the marshal.

In any event, it is sometimes difficult to say whether the gamblers corrupt the authorities by bribery or whether the authorities extort money from the gamblers. In many cases, gambling is the lesser of the two evils, just as political corruption and mobster influence during the prohibition era was a good deal worse than booze.

19. Con Games Played On Gamblers

CONFIDENCE MEN have an old saying: "You can't cheat an honest man." Although the statement doesn't always hold up for crooked gambling in general, there is still enough truth in it to ease the con man's conscience and perhaps to permit him some devious pleasure in his flimflam art.

Over the years many a larcenous dullard has been duped into thinking he has an unfair advantage in some game or gamble, only to find himself out-schemed or double-crossed. Countless suckers have taken the bait—hook, line, and sinker—on what they thought was a sure thing. Even preachers have fallen to con artists. In *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi*, George Devol, an amusing devil who took great delight in fleecing pious people, wrote about relieving one minister (as an example of several) of \$1,000 plus his watch and chain.

One of Devol's cohorts, Canada Bill Jones, was also a con man who delighted in beating preachers. Reportedly, Canada Bill offered Union Pacific \$25,000 per year to allow him to work the trains "without molestation, a condition of the offer being that he would not attempt to victimize any class of passengers except preachers."

Both Devol and Canada Bill were masters of three-card monte (sometimes called find the queen), a game that will serve here to illustrate the difference between a con game and merely a crooked or gaffed game of chance.

In its purest form (which certainly isn't snow-white), three-card monte is just a gamble. The dealer exposes three cards, one of which is a queen. The dealer then tosses the cards face down on a table and manipulates them, just as in the shell game. When he has finished his act, the dealer makes bets with bystanders that they cannot locate the queen (or some card they have agreed on). If the dealer is "honest," he is simply betting that his hand is quicker than the bystander's eye.

The game becomes indisputably dishonest when the dealer palms out the queen and tosses another card in its place. There is, of course, no way that an onlooker can win. The dealer has a sure thing (as long as he doesn't get caught palming), but his problem is that the bystanders are reluctant to bet much money on the game simply because they suspect some sort of hanky-panky. This is where the confidence element comes in.

While betting with a confederate (called a copper), the dealer coughs or feigns some distraction just long enough for the bettor (his partner) to bend the corner of the queen or mark it with a pencil. Then the dealer tosses the cards and takes bets. His copper wins simply by turning up the card with the bent corner. The bystanders, having seen the copper bend the card and win on it, are ready now to jump in for some of the easy money.

The dealer may play along with the suckers for a while, but when he gets enough money on the line he substitutes another bent card for the queen!

How much money the con man can win at this trick depends in large measure on how good he is at stringing the suckers along and on how skillfully brash he is at talking up a large bet. Thus, the successful monte man has to be talented not only at sleight of hand but also at acting. Here's one of Devol's standard spiels:

While walking over the boat I met a gentleman who I thought had money (and I hardly ever made a mistake in my man). I invited him to join me in a drink, and then steered him into the barber shop. I told him I had lost some money betting on cards, but I did not mind it very much, as my father was wealthy. While I was showing him how I had lost the money, my partner came in; and after watching me throw the cards for a little while, he wanted to bet me \$100 he could pick the card. I threw them again, and told him to put up. He "turned," and won the money.

Then, turning to the man, he showed him one of the corners turned up, and wanted to bet me again. I told him I would not play with a man that beat me. The man then asked me if I would bet with him. I said I would, providing the other fellow would not tell him which card to turn, which was agreed to. The man then got out his big roll, and put up \$100. I told him if he won I would only bet him the one time; and if I won, I would only be even; and that I would not bet less than \$500. He put up the \$500, and turned the wrong card.

After putting the money out of sight, I began to throw the cards again; for I saw a diamond stud and ring worth about \$1,000. While the cards were on the table I turned around to spit, and my partner marked one of the cards with a pencil, and let the man see the mark. Then he [the partner] bet me \$500 and won it; then he walked away. The man began to get nervous and feel for his money; but he had only about \$75 left, and wanted to bet that. I told him I had just lost \$500, and would not bet less than \$1,000. He insisted on betting the \$75, but I told him to keep it for expenses, and that I would bet him \$500 against his stud and ring. Up they went, and I put up \$500. Over went the marked card, and he lost again.

Devol had, of course, palmed out the marked card and put in one with a similar mark.

Devol and Canada Bill had even more elaborate acts, and often one or the other dressed himself up as a cowboy or some such character. Because of their unabashed skill at talking up large wagers, the two knaves won millions aboard the river-boats and passenger trains. But, ironically, both were suckers for bucking the tiger at faro, which was usually a crooked game in those days. Except for what they spent on high living both Devol and Canada Bill passed the easy money on to another man's game!

A favorite trick of con artists is to lead the larcenous victim into believing that he is cheating in a game of cards or that he is working as a confederate for a cardsharp. He will, therefore, back a good hand to the limit because he thinks he knows what his opponent holds.

Everyone has heard the old story about two slickers playing against each other. On the big hand, they bet and raised each other until all the money was in the pot. Then the dealer announced four aces, showed his hand, and reached for the money.

"Hold on," said the other, laying down a straight flush and raking in the pot.

"You cheated!" said the dealer. "That's not the hand I dealt you!"

This sort of thing becomes a con game when a third party is involved. For example, a con man tells a sucker that he is a cardsharp and needs some help in fleecing a wealthy poker player who, for some reason or other, needs taking down a notch or two. Once the game is in progress, the dealer gives the victim four queens with an ace

kicker. There is a good deal of betting and raising until finally the dealer himself drops out. At the showdown, the victim's four ladies with ace kicker are beaten by four kings.

There are several variations on this trick, but the most popular one with con men is called "the tip." A quote from John Philip Quinn's *Gambling and Gambling Devices* shows how it works:

The accompanying illustration [Figure 89] affords a view of two "skin" gamblers engaged in victimizing a "sucker" by means of a trick familiarly known among the fraternity as "tipping" or "signing the hand." Large sums of money have been won through this means, not only from verdant dupes, but even from professionals who prided themselves upon their astuteness. In order to work it successfully, marked

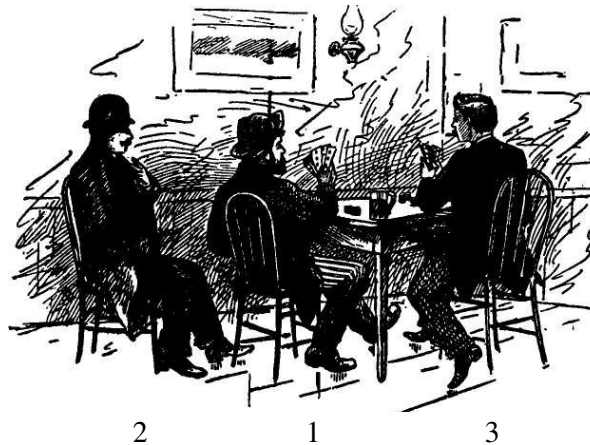


Figure 89

cards are indispensable, and at least one of the confederates, who act in unison, must be an expert at the use of "paper," as marked or "advantage" cards are called among the gamblers.

The cut shows the method in which the trick is carried on. Player number 3 represents the "sucker," player number 2 the swindler who has induced him to play on the promise of "tipping" the hand of number 1, who is in reality the partner of number 2, although, of course, this latter fact is unknown to number 3. The method of playing this nefarious confidence game may be best shown by an illustration. Number 2 always faithfully signals number 3 precisely what cards are in the hands of number 1. The latter being an expert marked card player, of course, knows with absolute certainty what cards are held by number 3. Let us suppose that number 1 holds a pair of sixes and number 3 a pair of fives. Number 2 signals to number 3 that number 1 has in his hands a low pair. Number 3 is naturally in the dark as to whether the pair in question is of a lower denomination than his own, and in the hope that it may prove to be makes his bet. Number 1 immediately "raises" him, and this is continued as long as the victim can be induced to wager, or until number 3 has "staked" his "pile." The hands being "shown down," of course number 1 takes the stakes.

The beauty of the tip is that the money is won on rather bluffish bets made on mediocre hands. Therefore, the victim can be strung along for quite some time instead of being scared off by a loss on a knockout hand.

In other con schemes, the victims are fleeced by being led to believe they are in cahoots with a dealer in a house game or casino. Here's an example that has been

pulled many times. A high-rolling gambler is approached by a steerer for a large craps game, probably one of the floating kind. The steerer tells him that the dealer needs some extra money and will, for a percentage of the winnings, sell the gambler \$1,000 worth of chips for \$500. This won't be noticed, the steerer says, because there'll be plenty of action at the table. The gambler jumps at the chance. How can he lose when he's getting two chips for one?

The dice are crooked, that's how. But it looks like a good lively game, so the victim buys more chips, again getting two for one. What the victim doesn't know is that half the gambler's are shills and the other half are two-for-one victims like himself.

Similar con games have been worked in licensed casinos unbeknown to the house or to the dealers. At Monte Carlo, for example, an American lady from Wichita, Kansas, was approached by a slicker who claimed to be in cahoots with a roulette croupier, but they needed an accomplice unknown to the casino officials. The plan was that whenever the croupier dropped ashes from his cigarette, the ball would land on red. The woman was to place bets for herself as well as for the dealer and con man. She agreed.

At the table, the croupier soon dropped some ashes and the lady placed bets on red. It won and the con man collected his share. At length the croupier, a chain smoker, dropped some more ashes. Again red won. It worked a third time. But then black started hitting—and the con man was no longer at the lady's side. Surprisingly, the lady reported the con game to the casino management, who quickly forbade all croupiers to smoke on the job.

In still another variation, the dealer himself cons a player into thinking they are in cahoots to cheat the house. The house is (or can be) innocent in the matter, and the dealer ends up with the money. Here's such a story, a reminiscence from an old New York City faro dealer:

I was not surprised one day when my friend came and told me that "Old Nick" (that'll do for the proprietor's name) owed him \$5,000, representing his interest in the game in lieu of a salary, which he refused to pay over. My friend proposed that I should come to his bank and play while he was dealing, and he would fix the deck so that I could win out what "Old Nick" owed him and something over for myself. Being a dealer myself, and knowing that a sign from my friend would indicate just how the cards were to run through a deal, I saw that it was possible for me to right my friend's wrongs and make a few hundred out of "Old Nick."

The first night everything seemed to go wrong. I got the sign to play "single out" and the cards ran "double out," and when I played "double out" they "singled out." I lost \$1,000 and left the place, as mad a man as you ever saw. The next day I met my friend, who declared that it was the most astonishing thing he ever heard of, that he had acted squarely all through, and that somebody must have changed the decks in the drawer of the table so that he got hold of the wrong one. He offered to make my loss good if I did not win out the full stake at the next sitting. He seemed square and I believed him. The next night I lost \$1,000 more, and when I left the place I was crazy mad. I didn't dare say anything there, for it would have hurt me at my own place to have it known that I was in a "brace" at another game. I decided to wait until the next day and give the false friend a thrashing at least.

The next day, however, the bank was closed and the dealer had skipped. "Old Nick" had lost money on the races, had grown desperate, had "plunged," and "gone broke." His partner, my friend the dealer, knew that the bank would close and roped me in for a "stake" to get away with. I was terribly angry, for I had been influenced almost entirely by my sympathy for my friend and I wanted to help him out.

There are several con games that have been worked at the racetracks. The most common one used today is pulled by two characters who pretend to have some sort of inside information and agree to cut a sucker in for some of the easy money. Usually they will have an elaborate buildup, similar to those used by Devol, in which one partner will be reluctant to cut the sucker in. But at length they both agree to place a bet for the sucker. Gratefully he gives them the money, but of course they don't come back, win, lose, or draw.

In a 1972 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, Titanic Thompson reported an amusing episode about how he was conned while thinking he was fixing a race in Saratoga. An ex-jockey approached Ti and told him that the jockeys for the two favorites would hold back for a price. Ti took the proposition, paying \$5,000 to each jockey and \$2,000 to the ex-jockey for setting up the deal. Then he placed \$20,000 on an 8-to-1 shot. Well. . . one of the favorites broke the track record and the other ran a close second! Ti headed for the jockey's room-only to find that the real jockeys were not the fellows he had paid off! Two stableboys had got his money and left town with it. Ti took the con in his stride, saying, "I just had to laugh because I had flat got flimflammed. It was nobody's fault but mine."

While fixing another race, Ti told a bought-out jockey that a sharpshooter was in the stands and a high-powered, scope-sighted rifle would be aimed at him, cocked and ready to shoot him off the horse in case he felt like winning!

Fortunately, I've never been taken in by a con artist at the card table, casino, or racetrack. But I'll have to admit that I was clipped for a tad of money in another context. At the time I was in Huntsville, Alabama, working as a technical writer for a space firm and moonlighting at various poker games about town. One of my poker buddies, who was also a technical writer at the same aerospace firm, suggested that we set up a "shopper"-type newspaper to promote the downtown area of Huntsville. We had several meetings with an organization of merchants, and they were interested in the idea. In short, they would advertise, but our problem was that a good deal of money would be required to get out the first few issues. So, we started looking for ways to cut production costs.

One of the other employees, who had just recently joined the space firm, had become our third partner. This one didn't play poker, but he was a part-time preacher, a fact that would, I think, have brought a belly laugh from old George Devol! Anyhow, our new partner suggested that we rig up to set our own type economically. As it happened, he knew of a Justowriter that was being released by a government agency that sold surplus equipment for use in educational institutions. We could get it at a steal—only \$150. But the deal would have to be handled in a hush-hush manner through a school. As it happened, he knew a school principal in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, who would go along with the deal. The principal was a good friend of our new partner, having made his acquaintance through the church.

So, we had a Justowriter for only \$150! My poker buddy and I each gave the new partner our check for \$50. He in turn was to add his part and give cash to the principal, who in his turn was to purchase the machine. He was to keep the machine a couple of weeks, just to make it look good, and then turn it over to us.

Well, a month went by but no Justowriter turned up. Our new partner had, however, learned about a headliner machine that was also available. And he just might be able to get a small offset press. Dirt cheap. Same deal.

Meanwhile, I had cooled on the shopper idea because I saw a bunch of headaches in running such a business and I didn't want to get tied down with it. I might add, however, that I had not begun to suspect that the new partner was a con man. So, I pulled out in good faith, donating my third of the Justowriter.

My poker buddy proceeded to buy some other equipment. As time went on and no machinery turned up, however, he became highly suspicious of his new partner. He called the principal in Muscle Shoals, who, of course, honestly didn't know what he was talking about. A little investigation showed that the new partner had conned several other company employees on similar deals—selling them Jeeps and whatnot—for about \$7,000. I don't think anyone knows how much money he got, because most people are reluctant to admit having been taken in on such deals. I'm also certain that he worked similar swindles in a civil-service office. Anyhow, the boys at the space firm tried to collect the money. They couldn't. They tried to have him put in jail. They couldn't. The law officials advised them to go through civil proceedings instead of taking criminal action simply because the guy had not clearly broken any criminal laws. But the aerospace boys figured that all a judge in civil court could do was tell the con man that he owed them money, which they already knew. They also figured that lawyers would end up with the money.

Ultimately, the only satisfaction they got was in causing the man to lose his job at the space firm. Losing the job, however, put him in excellent position to pull off the bankruptcy bit.

I didn't go to the bankruptcy hearing, but I was told that it was something to see. Normally the guy looked quite upstanding, as a part-time preacher should. But he appeared in court with old clothes and sat hunched in his seat. He had removed his false teeth so that his whole countenance seemed sunken. No one ever saw a more pitiful sight. No one ever heard a more pitiful story! In short, he won.

Sometime after the bankruptcy hearings he moved to another town and took the money with him. A little later I learned, or was told, that he had gotten into his sister-in-law for a good deal of cash and had somehow embezzled church funds. I also heard that he has written a book on how to raise money for churches and charitable purposes!

20. The Ultimate Gaff

THE GENERAL PUBLIC, and even a lot of gamblers, don't know it, but there is a gaff that beats a cold deck, a juiced roulette wheel, and first-flop dice. It's a sawed-off shotgun. Often called a sawyer, it wins anywhere that there is a group of unprotected gamblers. It works effectively in any gambling game, but the account in this chapter leans heavily toward poker, not only because that happens to be my favorite game but also because in 1971 I published a poker-related article (on which this chapter is based) about heists in *Sports Illustrated*. Without the reportorial support of the *Sports Illustrated* correspondents around the country, I fear that the article would have left the impression of having been based on isolated incidents that occurred in Huntsville, Alabama. Owing largely to the nationwide coverage, the article gained scope and would, I think, convince any gambler that heists are something to consider and possibly to reckon with. It is for the same reason that I use the information in this chapter.

Personally, I've never been heisted during any gambling session—but I have missed a few lessons by the skin of my teeth. The fact is that a lot of gamblers have been robbed. Consider what happened to the good guys in my favorite poker game:

They stiffened one by one around the table. Each man sat as silently and as rigidly as his straight-backed chair. The one exception was a feisty little aerospace executive named Larry, who was busy counting out a \$50 bet. Sensing the hush, and seeing that all his opponents' eyes were on something behind him, he wheeled about and found himself looking down the barrel of a sawed-off shotgun. The man with the gun had taken his position behind a breakfast bar that separated the poker nook from the rest of the kitchen. Even at this close range, that sawyer had the whole table covered.

"That shotgun doesn't scare me worth a damn," Larry said, point-blank.

The man jerked back a step. The safety catch on the sawyer clicked off.

"Shut up, Larry," said a seasoned gambler across the table, who had already been robbed twice that year. "Don't pay any attention to Larry," he said, apologetically, to the man with the gun. "He's been drinking too much tonight."

Larry hadn't had a drop to drink.

Nervously, the heister glanced over his left shoulder just in time to see his accomplice pistol-pointing the host's wife and three-year-old son into the kitchen. A cool pro, this one had somehow roused the woman and the boy from the master bedroom without raising a sound. After placing them against the refrigerator and telling them to keep quiet, he calmly took charge of the robbery.

First, he sacked the pot and each player's table money. Next, he relieved two brothers-in-law (the Gold-Dust Twins, as we called them) of matching diamond-studded watches and horseshoe rings; adding insult to injury, and revealing how well the game had been cased, he didn't even look at the other jewelry around the table! Then he poked the pistol into the host's back and made him lie belly flat on the kitchen floor. When he had thus prostrated the rest of the men, he turned his attention to the boy, who in the meanwhile had started howling in spite of his mother's jittery efforts to appease him. Apparently this heister had a way with kids, for he quickly pacified the boy, not with "Goochy-goochy-goo" stuff, but by letting him play with the pistol!

Covered by his sawyer-wielding partner, he tucked the pistol under his belt and started frisking each man. First he took whatever money they had in their pockets. Then he went through their wallets. In spite of frequent prodding from his more jumpy partner, he was thoughtful enough, and leisurely enough, to leave their driver's licenses, identification papers, and snapshots of loved ones!

The last man to be frisked happened to be an old poker buddy of mine from down home. On business in Rocket City, U.S.A. (as Huntsville, Alabama, is called), he had telephoned me that afternoon to find out how a stranger in town might spend an evening. I told him that I was going to a hell of a good poker session, a private game made up mostly of missile and rocket engineers, technical writers, and such people. He jumped at the invitation to come along, although I warned him that these guys played a tough game of poker, and that the stakes weren't exactly penny-ante. He was a good poker player himself, though, and was holding his own when I quit the game at midnight. So, here he was, being frisked. When the heister found his travel allowance in a secret compartment of his wallet, my friend said, "Look, I'm from out of town and I don't even have enough gas in my car to get me back home."

The heister gave him five dollars!

Not all robbers are so generous. Indeed, gamblers are lucky to come through a stick-up with their pants, and, literally, their shirts. During a recent December, for example, all the players in three separate poker games around Huntsville were stripped of all their clothing except skivvies. Into a gunnysack went pants, shirts, shoes, credit cards, identification papers, car keys—everything.

So, the guys in my favorite poker game were lucky (almost privileged, I told them) to be robbed by such nice fellows. They didn't quite see it that way, though, and were downright indignant that I should call them lucky, since I had been rabbit-footed enough to get out of the house a \$500 winner just five minutes before the heisters came in!

A few months later, I barely missed another robbery, or a dogged attempt at one, when I was invited to a meeting of some pros and relatively high rollers of the area. Table stakes. Cash only. I really wanted to go, but at the last minute I backed out because I had to drive to Kentucky the next day and I wanted a fresh start. This session was set up in a neighboring town in an old warehouse of a construction

company. A lumber and materials yard was fenced in out back, leaving only a front entrance to the place—and no quick exit. The door opened into a narrow entrance way, which in turn led into the poker room. Experienced in such matters, the gamblers had reinforced the front door with 1-inch plywood and had jammed it shut by placing some 2-by-4 timbers between the door and the opposite wall.

At about 11 P.M., when all the gamblers had arrived and secured the place for a long poker session, a sudden bang came. Somebody was trying to knock down the door! Another bang. And another. A short silence. Then the bangs came in an almost rhythmic series. With each bang, the bottom right side of the door would spring in, then back again as the resilient plywood did its job. According to the poker players, the banging continued for a long, long time. (A full minute or two, however, would seem like a long time under the circumstances.) Then the banging stopped. Silence. The silence continued for a long, long time. When the poker players finally opened up and came out, they found an abandoned 200-pound battering ram made of concrete!

I'm certainly glad that I dodged that battering-ram experience, because I would surely have aged several years during all that pounding, but I'm even gladder that I missed a robbery that was reported in a Huntsville newspaper. Some guys were playing poker in an unoccupied farmhouse up near Jonesboro, Tennessee. The heisters came and before they left they had killed one player and critically wounded another. The paper didn't give the details on exactly what happened but probably the poker players flushed or else another Larry pushed his bluff too far.

Even before I read of this killing, I had begun to realize that heists were something to be reckoned with, and that the gambler's real concern is with the heisters, not the cops. While doing some fancy calculations of various carding odds (which ended up in my book *Poker Strategy and Winning Play*), I joked with my poker friends about figuring in a heist factor for Huntsville and north Alabama! The truth is that one's chances of getting robbed in a poker game are about the same all over the country. I haven't attempted to compile a set of statistics, but I do know that a number of poker games have been heisted from coast to coast, some in such unlikely places as Antonito, Colorado, population 1,000.

The problem with doing research on such robberies is that very, very few of them are reported to the police—and even fewer are reported in newspapers or other media. Neither cops nor reporters usually hear about a poker game (or any gambling session) being robbed simply because the players themselves keep it quiet. As a former assistant superintendent of the Pittsburgh police put it, "Most of the robberies are not reported because if it's a professional game with the operators taking a cut it's illegal, and there is no way to prosecute the stickup men. Under the law, you are required to prosecute the operators of the illegal gambling—in this case, the victims. So, they usually don't report it."

Even if the robbery is reported to the police, there is a good chance that the public will not hear of it. One of the three "skivvy" robberies in Huntsville bears this out. The game was held in a conference room at a motel, and one indignant victim walked directly into the lobby in his shorts to call the cops! I know that a newspaper reporter covered the event, which would make good copy because the robbers got about \$30,000. But the story was not printed, possibly because most of the men were influential about town.

In some cases a robbery is reported, all right, but the victims and the media fail to mention anything about poker or gambling. Consider a robbery that recently occurred at the Hillcrest Country Club in Indianapolis. A newspaper stated that armed men crashed a "guest night" party and made off with \$10,000. No mention of poker. The next day, another paper reported that the men had been playing poker. Apparently the victims tried to avoid the tie-in with the Great American Card Game, or else tried to hush it up.

In a few cases, the newspapers spill the beans with or without a police report being filed. A good example was the December 1969 robbery of the Good Guys Club in Covington, Kentucky, a gambling town just across the river from Cincinnati. The robbers took from \$40,000 to \$60,000 in cash and jewelry from a group of poker players in the back room. "We certainly know it happened," said a spokesman from the Covington Police Department, "and we have a pretty good idea about who the participants in the game were, but all are reluctant to make an official complaint." The robbery came to public attention by an article in a local newspaper.

In spite of the fact that most poker stickups go unreported, there is enough evidence to convince me that virtually all of them are conducted by professionals. These guys know their business—and their victims. They are smug bandits, simply because they know that their jobs are not likely to be subjected to police investigation. They don't even need a license to steal! The leisurely pace of the robbery at my favorite Huntsville game shows just how cocksure the heisters can be. They wore neither masks to cover their faces nor gloves to prevent fingerprints.

Yet, some heisters do wear masks. (The ones who hit the Hillcrest Country Club were decked out in denim coveralls, work gloves, Halloween masks, and even wigs.) Moreover, their methods vary widely. But most jobs do have one thing in common. Professional heisters almost invariably carry along at least one sawyer and will seldom attempt to cover a poker table in close quarters without one.

An unusual exception to the sawyer rule occurred recently in San Francisco. A loner sat in on a poker game and played along for several hours. Suddenly the guy arose, pulled a pistol, fired three wayward shots, took all the money, and made away. But this robbery may have been unpremeditated, a case similar to the old story about a Smith & Wesson beating four aces!

In another robbery, the heisters probably didn't even need weapons at all, but they were no doubt armed. In Pittsburgh, four men forced their way into a hotel room where a poker game was in progress. They came posed as detectives, flashed a badge, and announced that everyone was under arrest. The money and cards were gathered as "evidence." Telling the gamblers to stay put until they returned, the slick robbers walked out with \$12,000!

A less ingenious but very effective *modus operandi* was used in a heist near Beeville, Texas. Sixteen men were playing poker in a ranch house. At 4 A.M. three robbers lobbed a tear-gas bomb and two gas shells into the den. The robbers came in wearing gas masks. They marched the sniffing gamblers outside, stood them against the wall, and proceeded to frisk them of cash and valuables. The gamblers claimed \$26,000 as their loss, but rumors put the figure as high as \$70,000. The owner of the ranch said that it looked to him like an "inside job."

Inside job or not, he put his finger on what I personally consider to be the most interesting question about poker game heists. Who sets them up?

In many professional gambling games, players come and go so frequently that almost anybody could case the joint. Many of the patrons of these games are already on the shady side, and it wouldn't surprise me if some of them make a living, or at least regularly supplement their income, as professional finger men. Also, a good many robberies of "house games" are instigated by competing gamblers or gambling mobs. There was, in fact, some speculation about the booming Good Guys Club in Covington being hit, or set up, by other gamblers in the area who needed some of the business.

I do think that housemen in professional games are not logical suspects as far as robbing or fingering their own game is concerned. A robbery hurts business considerably, and may even cause the game to break up entirely. Nor do worldly gamblers set up their own game, because frightening the pigeons with a sawyer is the last thing they want!

It is usually easier to detect the finger man in private and social games, but each particular game presents a separate whodunit. The game in Huntsville to which I took my unfortunate friend was in all probability set up by a highly undesirable character who wormed his way into the group.

Incidentally, the guys in the Huntsville game had sense enough to call the cops as soon as the heisters left. The fuzz wanted to haul me in as a finger-man suspect, since I had quit the session only five minutes before the event. But the players who knew me as possibly only one poker player knows another said that I had not done the thing. If I had done it, I would have stayed put instead of leaving so conspicuously.

Although it is difficult to spot a finger man before it's too late, there are a few precautions that will improve one's chances of pulling through a poker game with his pants still on. Avoid those professional and house games that do not provide adequate protection for their customers. Why pay to play in a joint where such protection isn't provided? On the other hand, protection runs up the house's overhead considerably and may result in too large a cut being dragged from the pots. In this case, it becomes a question of being robbed quickly or slowly.

But the protection is usually effective in keeping heisters away. There was, for example, a rash of poker-game stickups in the Atlanta area a few years ago. Today robberies are comparatively rare for a town of Atlanta's size, not because of a police crackdown, but because, as a local gambler said, "The games are generally guarded by a couple of guys with guns who are stationed at strategic points in and around where the game is being played." He added, "We usually screen the guys at the table. Most of these people are respectable and don't go in for funny stuff like playing where you can get your head blown off by some punk who wants to take the house for all it's worth." I might add that the well-protected casinos in Nevada and the licensed poker palaces in California have very little trouble with heisters inside the joints. Some establishments even provide protection in the parking lots—where it's needed.

Providing protection is not usually feasible in a social game, except possibly in the Bet-a-Million Gates class. (About the neatest method I ever heard of was chartering a jet for a high-stakes game—but that was before hijacking became so frequent!) Actually, most social gambling games are inherently less hazardous than most house games. Still, it is wise to avoid games where lots of players come and go at all hours, to know well the guys one plays with, and to insist on floating the game from week to week. (By "floating" I mean moving it from place to place, not holding it on a boat. A "floating" game on a paddleboat in Georgia's Lake Lanier was robbed of \$15,000!)

I want to emphasize that poker players aren't the only gamblers who are easy game for heisters. An acquaintance of mine was held up at a cockfight in Louisiana, and even pinochle players have been heisted. In Kansas City, four men crashed a pinochle session, cut the telephone lines, made the card players remove their pants, tied them up with a clothesline, and made away with \$4,000.

High-stakes gin rummy games are not as apt to be heisted as poker games simply because often only two players are involved and because payoffs are likely to be made with checks instead of cash. But it isn't too uncommon for a gin rummy shark to work in cahoots with a jewelry thief. Once in Miami a gin hustler and his "wife" went to work on a rich victim and his wife, who were guests at a large hotel. One night, after gaining their confidence, the sharper invited them to play at a private residence, and the sharper's female partner advised the victim's wife to leave her jewelry in the hotel room instead of taking it to the game.

After the party departed for the gin session, the thief entered the room, got the loot, and boarded a jet while the gin session was in progress. The visitors lost a few

thousand bucks at gin, and by the time they came back to their room the jewelry had already been cut up in New York City!

Most craps sessions are especially vulnerable to heisters because there are lots of gamblers with lots of money. For this reason, most of the large craps sessions around big cities are of the floating kind, or else there will be lots of protection and secrecy. Here's part of a question-and-answer section from a report of the New York State Commission of Investigation:

Q. The professional dice game is a highly organized affair, is it not?

A. That's right.

Q. It shifts from place to place?

A. It is called a floating game, for the reason that it goes from place to place. . . .

Q. Is there a Shylock at the game?

A. Yes, for the purpose of preventing a stickup. They are very much afraid of being stuck up. The Shylock will have money outside or some place where he can get it.

So, apparently New York craps shooters often pay Shy-locking interest rates as a sort of insurance against being heisted. A good many other gamblers arrange for credit or checking privileges so that they won't have much cash on them.

Years ago, as the story goes, there was a big craps game held each Sunday in some woods on the outskirts of Birmingham, Alabama. There were usually several tables going, and lots of money changed hands. One Sunday a band of robbers stealthily surrounded the whole bunch and moved in. Suddenly they appeared from behind trees and bushes with sawyers and submachine guns ready. The "seven come eleven" and "eighter from Decatur" talk died off. The dice lay still. Before proceeding to gather in the loot, the heisters warned the gamblers not to remove money from the tables. One dentist, who seemed to have a propensity for crapping out, had lost all but a few dollars and was afraid the heisters would think he had ratholed part of his stake. "That's all I've got left," he said, "but I'll be glad to write you a check!"

APPENDIX: DON'T CHEAT YOURSELF

How To Shuffle

TOO MANY PEOPLE, including some who gamble for big money, do not know how to shuffle a deck of playing cards properly or even thoroughly. They start exposing cards to their opponents even before the riffle begins. Typically, they pick the deck up off the table, break it into two parts, and square up the packets as shown in Figure 78, exposing at least two cards. Then they riffle the packets away from themselves, again exposing cards, as shown in Figure 79.

After the riffle, they expose the bottom cards blatantly to the players across the table by squaring the deck as shown in Figure 80. Or else they bow the packets and flutter the cards back together, as shown in Figure 81.

The riffle shuffle that I recommend isn't nearly so fancy, but it exposes no cards. Here's the procedure:

1. Place the deck flat on the table. Cut off the top half and place it flat on the table with the bottom half. Square up the two packets, as shown in Figure 82.

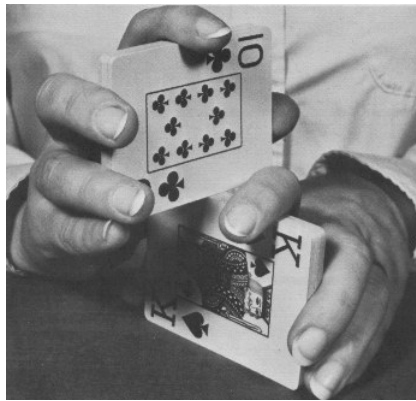


Figure 90

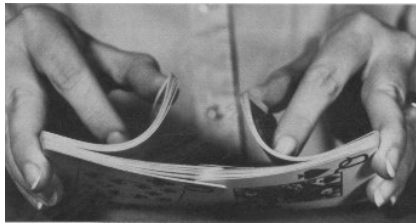


Figure 91

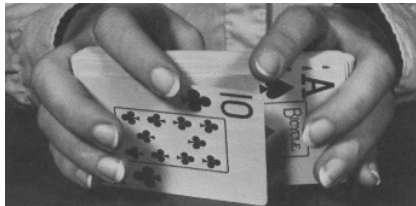


Figure 92



Figure 93



Figure 94

2. Angle the packets slightly inward and riffle with the thumbs, as shown in Figure 83. This may seem a little awkward at first, but it's really easier than the usual method after one gets the hang of it. (And it mixes the cards more thoroughly.) Remember that both packets stay flat on the table; in fact, the fingers push down on the outer edges of the packets while the thumbs lift the inner edges slightly.

3. Push the packets together as shown in Figure 84 when the thumb riffle is completed.

4. Square up the deck as shown in Figure 85. Then repeat the whole procedure for the next riffle. Thus, several riffles can be made, quite quickly, without taking the deck off the surface of the table.



Figure 95



Figure 96

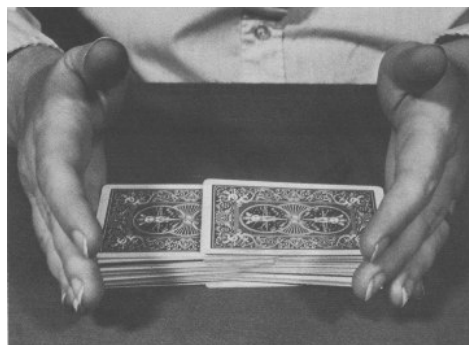


Figure 97

How To Cut

THE CUT is a card player's best protection against a stacked deck and shifts. Often a single cut will either hit a crimp or allow a locator in the game to follow the relative position of a card or a stock of cards. Although I often make a single cut when I have no reason to be suspicious, I recommend the Scarne cut as standard procedure.

First, remove a packet (about one third of the deck) from the middle (Figure 86). Place it on top (Figure 87). Now make a regular cut (Figure 88). This cut will foil almost any stacked deck. But if you suspect a locator in your game, go through the procedure two or three times.



Figure 98



Figure 99



Figure 100

How To Deal and Draw

SOME DEALERS EXPOSE the top card on the serve, as in Figure 89. Others expose the bottom card from time to time, as when checking their hole card in stud poker (Figure 90). The best advice is to be careful and to form the habit of tilting the front of the deck slightly downward when dealing, as shown in Figure 91.

When dealing some card games, or when drawing from a stock in others, it is a good idea to spread the deck as shown in Figure 92. The top card can be slid off a fanned stock easier than it can be picked up from a square stock, and with less danger of exposing (or peeking at) the second card. I recommend the fanned deck for dealing the up cards during the later rounds in stud poker and for drawing from the stock in gin rummy.



Figure 101



Figure 102



Figure 103



Figure 104

Books About Cheating And Related Topics

- Asbury, Herbert, *Suckers Progress: An Informal History of Gambling in America from the Colonies to Canfield*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1938.
- Binstock, Judah, *Casino Administration*. London: The Bodley Head, 1969.
- Cameron, Judson J., *Cheating at Bridge*. Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1933.
- Chafetz, Henry, *A History of Gambling in the United States*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1960.
- Davis, Clyde Brion, *Something for Nothing*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1956.
- Devol, George H., *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi*. New York: Henry Holt, 1926.
- Erdnase, S. W., *The Expert at the Card Table*. London: Entered at Stationer's Hall, copyright 1902. (Several reprints available.)
- Foster, R. F., *Fosters Complete Hoyle: An Encyclopedia of Indoor Games* (rev. ed.). Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1953.
- Garcia, Frank, *Marked Cards and Loaded Dice*. New York: Bramhall House, 1962.
- Goodman, Mike, *How to Win*. Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing Company, 1963.
- Herald, George W. and Edward D. Radin, *The Big Wheel: Monte Carlo's Opulent Century*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963.
- Ireland, Laurie L., *Lessons in Dishonesty*. Chicago: Magic, Inc., 1938.
- Jacoby, Oswald, *Oswald Jacoby on Gambling*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1963.
- Albert H. Morehead (eds.), *The Fireside Book of Cards*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.
- James, H. K., *The Destruction of Mephisto's Greatest Web*. Salt Lake City: The Raleigh Publishing Company, 1914.
- Livingston, A. D., *Poker Strategy and Winning Play*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1971.
- Ludovici, L. J., *The Itch for Play*. London: Jarrolds, 1962.
- MacDougall, Michael, *Card Mastery*. New York: Louis Tannen, 1944.
- J. C. Furnas, *Gamblers Don't Gamble*. New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1940.
- McGuire, Eddie, *The Phantom of the Card Table: The Real Secrets of the Phantom Walter Irving Scott*. Las Vegas: Gambler's Book Club, 1969.
- McQuaid, Clement (ed.), *Gambler's Digest*. Northfield: Digest Books, Inc., 1971.
- Mario, Ed., *Seconds, Centers, Bottoms*, n.p., n.d.
- Maskelyne, John Nevil, *Sharps and Flats*. London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1894.
- Merlin, Jack, *And a Pack of Cards*. New York: Louis Tannen, 1964.
- Moss, Floyd, *Card Cheats—How They Operate*. New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1950.
- Newman; David (ed.), *Esquire's Book of Gambling*. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.
- Quinn, John Philip, *Fools of Fortune*. Chicago: The Anti-Gambling Association, 1892.
- Gambling and Gambling Devices*. Canton: J. P. Quinn Company, 1912.

- Radner, Sidney H., *How to Spot Card Sharps and Their Methods*. New York: Key Publishing Company, 1957.
- Radner on Dice*. New York: The Key Publishing Company, 1957.
- Radner on Roulette and Other Casino Games*. New York: The Key Publishing Company, 1958.
- Reese, Terence, *Story of an Accusation*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.
- Reid, Ed and Ovid Demaris, *The Green Felt Jungle*. New York: Trident Press, 1963.
- Scarne, John, *Scarne on Cards* (rev. ed.). New York: Crown Publishers, 1965.
- Scarne's Complete Guide to Gambling*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961. -, *The Odds Against Me*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966.
- Silberstang, Edwin, *Playboys Book of Games*. Chicago: Playboy Press, 1972.
- Stein, Clem, Jr., *Bridge and Gin Gambitry*. New York: Cornerstone Library, 1963.
- Thorp, Edward O., *Beat the Dealer: A Winning Strategy for the Game of Twenty-One*. New York: Random House, 1962.
- Turner, Wallace, *Gamblers Money*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.
- Welcome, John, *Great Scandals of Cheating at Cards*. New York: Horizon Press, 1963.
- Wilson, Allan N., *The Casino Gamblers Guide*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.
- Wykes, Alan, *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Gambling*. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1964.